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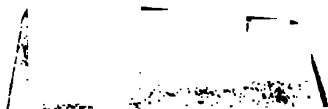
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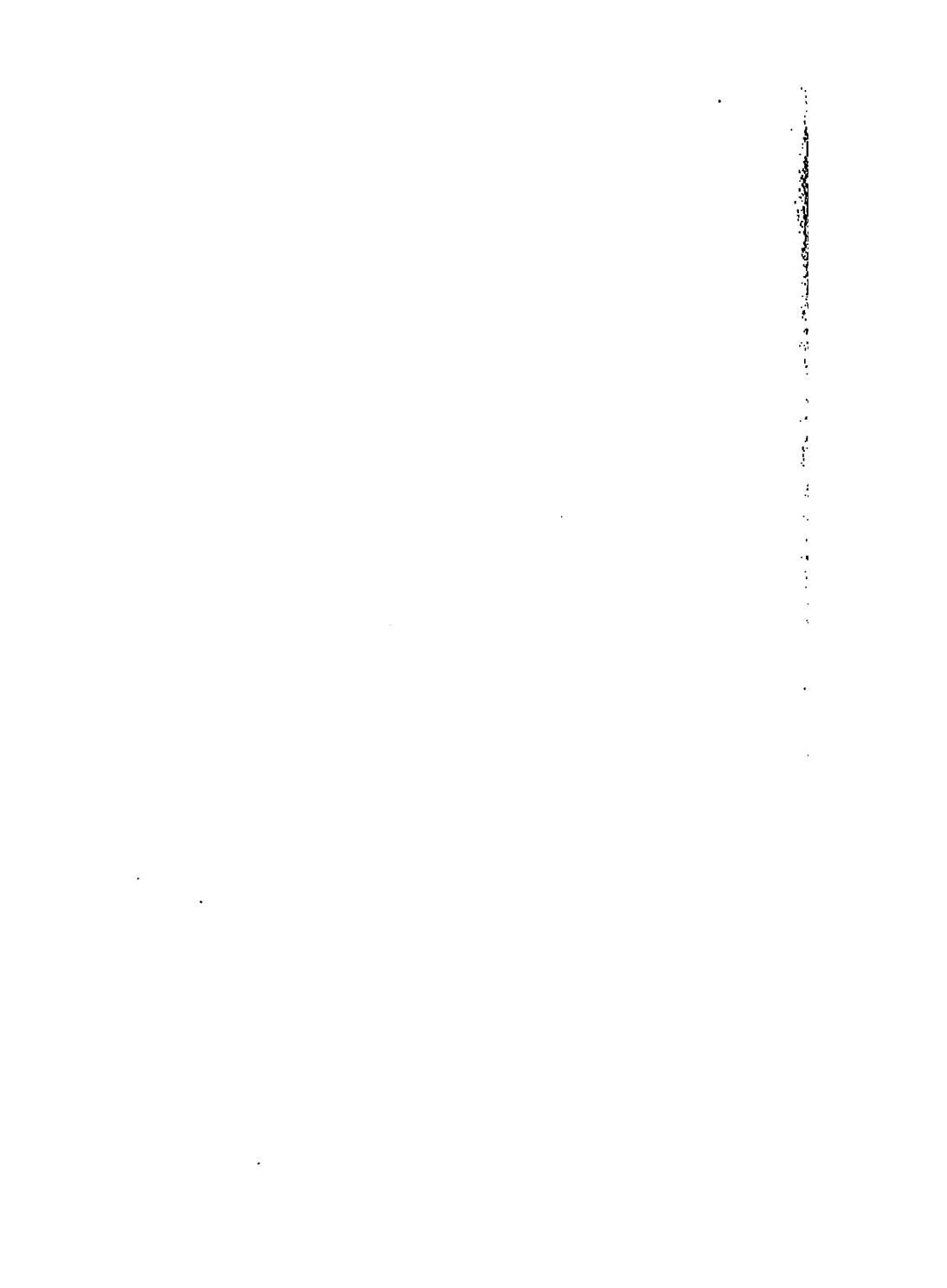


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THE GIFT OF
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Billy's Little Love Affair

BY
H. V. ESMOND



BILLY'S LITTLE LOVE AFFAIR

Comedy In Three Acts

BY
H. V. ESMOND

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GIFT OF

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BILLY'S LITTLE LOVE AFFAIR.

*Produced at the Criterion Theatre on September 2d, 1903.
with the following cast:*

Characters.

JACK FRERE.....	Mr. Allan Aynsworth.
SIR HARRY HARMON.....	Mr. Charles Groves.
JIM GREAVES.....	Mr. Sam Sothern.
MR. MUNKITTRICK.....	Mr. Mark Kinghorne.
CAPTAIN BECHER.....	Mr. Orlando Daly.
MR. RADDLES.....	Mr. J. W. MacDonald.
HAGSON.	Mr. Ian MacLaren.
HON. MRS. HERRING.....	Miss Carlotta Zerbini.
MRS. JIM GREAVES.....	Miss Florence St. John.
LADY DUNCAN.....	Miss Granville.
LADY ROOP.....	Miss Alice Beet.
LADY FAIRLEIGH.....	Mrs. E. H. Brooke.
MISS PERROT.....	Mrs. Cairn-James.
FIELDING.....	Miss Eileen Warren.
FOWLER.....	Miss Edith Cartwright.
MISS WILHELMINA MARR.....	Miss Eva Moore.

THE ACTION OF THE PLAY PASSES AT HARLESDON MANOR.

ACT I.—The Terrace.

ACT II.—The Smoking-Room.

ACT III.—The Hall.

Time—The Present Day.

BILLY'S LITTLE LOVE AFFAIR.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The terrace at Harlesdon Manor. An old stone Balustrade at back beyond and below with a view of the open country. On the L. a portion of the house is seen with large open windows, opening into the drawing-room. Steps lead from these windows down on to terrace. And steps also up from the grounds on to the terrace at right side of stage.*

(**DISCOVERED.**—Various OLD LADIES are sitting in cane chairs, dozing through the heat of the afternoon. LADY FAIRLEIGH, a benevolent, comfortable old lady; LADY ROOF, a very vacant looking lady, and the HON. MRS. HERRING, a stout plabby lady of fifty or thereabouts. They are all three comfortably asleep. MRS. HERRING has a small handkerchief resting on her somewhat large face. A moment after the curtain rises, MRS. HERRING becomes a little disturbed, and half waking, flutters with her handkerchief—then again replaces it over her eyes and endeavors to resume her slumbers. Another pause. She is again disturbed, sits up fiercely, and looks round enviously at her sleeping neighbours.)

MRS. H. (*seated R. C.*) No flies on them. (*a pause; she looks gloomily at LADY ROOF. Then sharply*) Mary! Wake up, Mary! (*LADY ROOF wakes and looks vaguely about. She has a note-book and pencil in her lap. MRS. H. fluttering her handkerchief*) Something could easily be done—treacle paper or one of those men with the hatband. No flies on you, Mary?

LADY R. (*with a chuckle*) Not since I took up journalism.

MRS. H. (*sadly*) Something on me attracts 'em.

(*Enter MAN SERVANT with tea tray, then MAID with covered dish. MRS. H. sighs, and she and LADY R. both settle back into their chairs again and close their eyes. MAN SERVANT and MAID set tea back of terrace, almost behind the house, then go quietly L. U. E., leaving the old ladies undisturbed.*)

(*MISS FERROT enters from drawing room and down steps L. H. Crosses up c. to table on platform. She is very handsome, though a somewhat discontented woman of thirty. She goes up at back to the tea table, and after a pause, rattles a cup and saucer, saying firmly.*)
MISS P. (*at table c.*) Tea! (*The three OLD LADIES wake with a start*)

LADY F. (*on settee up L. C.—a little dazed*) What was I saying?

MISS P. Tea! (*then realising there is no teapot on the table*) Oh, no, it's not here yet.

ALL OLD LADIES. Tea already?

LADY F. (*rising and moving down L. C.—looking at her watch*) Four! Gracious, nearly five! I must have dropped off. (*MISS P. crosses to table L.*)

MRS. H. (*in arm-chair L. C.—enviously*) You did—no flies on you either. (*LADY F. moves down to bench L. MRS. H. fluttering her handkerchief*) It's the little ones that tickle. Where's Jane? (*MISS P. crosses to c.*)

(*RADDLES, a weak-kneed gentleman of forty enters from R. 2, up steps to platform R. C.*)

MISS P. (*down R. C. L. of MRS. H.*) Probably sitting in her bedroom, regretting her second marriage. (*LADY F. is now down L. sitting on bench in front of steps*)

LADY R. (*in arm-chair R. H.—with a short chuckle*) I wonder does he ever regret it? (*RADDLES attempts to speak*)

MRS. H. Not while she allows him enough to dress on.

MISS P. (*c.*) I've heard that that allowance is somewhat intermittent.

LADY R. (*R.*) It has been reduced occasionally. (*she chuckles again*)

MRS. H. (*R. C. closing her eyes and speaking solemnly*) On the first occasion his dress money was reduced, as a protest he walked about in knickerbockers. I dread to contemplate *how* he will appear in public if it should be cut off entirely—

MR. R. (on platform—nervously) My view of the matter is—

LADY F. (on stone bench L. H., checks him quickly, lest he should be indiscreet—quickly) Mr. Raddles! Really.

(RADDLES subsides. MAID is seen in the drawing-room of house L. H. She enters, goes to window and gets book as if sent for it.)

LADY R. There's her maid. (calls) Fowler! (MAID comes to door facing audience) Where's your mistress?

FOWLER. (at door of house L. H.—gravely) She's locked herself into Mr. Greaves' room an hour or more, my lady. I don't think she'll partake of tea to-day. (FOWLER disappears off L. H. in house. MISS P. moves down R. of LADY F.)

LADY R. Locked herself in her husband's room? (chuckles)

LADY F. (a little distressed) Oh, dear, something fresh must have occurred.

MISS P. (moves L. a little of LADY F.—languidly) My dear Lady Fairleigh, when a woman of Jane's age marries a gilded youth who has lost nearly all his gliding, (look between MISS P. and RADDLES. He chuckles) something fresh is always occurring.

MRS. H. Or rather, something stale is always becoming fresh. (MISS P. moves C. RADDLES moves up to tea table)

MISS P. (moving to C.) And that's an evolution quite incompatible with domestic felicity. (up to table)

(MAN SERVANT enters L. U. E. with the tea-cake, places it on table R. hand side, and exits L. U. E.)

LADY F. Here comes the tea-cake. (MISS P. moves up C. RADDLES goes up to table at back)

MISS P. The tea is not there, is it, Mr. Raddles?

RAD. My view of the matter is—

MISS P. (interrupting him looking at table. Crossing towards balustrade R. C.) I see it isn't. (goes to R. C. Then looking down over balustrade into the grounds off R. 2 E.) There's that dreadful Lady Duncan. (comes C. RADDLES waves his hand to LADY D. off R.) I really think our dear hostess has gone a step too far in having her here. (coming back to C.)

MRS. H. (seated R. C.) It's a mercy Jim Greaves is away; won't it be a shock to him when he returns?

MISS P. (R. C. L. of MRS. H.) If I hadn't made all

my arrangements to stay for ten days, I should positively decline to meet her.

LADY F. (*rising and coming L. C., looking from one to the other in bewilderment*) Good gracious! I'm quite in the dark. What are you all talking about? (RADDLES *down L. C.*)

MRS. H. You don't mean to say you never heard of our host's affair with Lady Duncan?

MISS P. (*c. a little—softly*) And the little flat in Victoria Street?

LADY F. O, hush!

RAD. (*coming down C.*) My view of the story is this—(MRS. HERRING *checks his disclosure with a gesture*)

MRS. H. Least said soonest mended, Mr. Raddles. (RADDLES *scowls*) The story is perfectly true, but we don't believe it, of course.

LADY F. (*distressed*) Oh, don't let's discuss—(*goes to bench L. and sits*)

MRS. H. (*a little peevishly*) Nonsense! If we don't discuss it thoroughly, what right have we to disbelieve it?

MISS P. (*gently, as if reproving LADY F.*) Silence wouldn't be fair to Lady Duncan.

MRS. H. Mind you, I've heard it wasn't her *first* indiscretion.

MISS P. (*c. dreamily*) She was always a popular woman. (RADDLES *chuckles and goes to settee L.*)

LADY F. Oh, how *did* such a dreadful story leak out?

MRS. H. (*leaning back and folding her arms over herself*) It overflowed. (RADDLES *sits suddenly*) It didn't stop to leak. (MISS P. *crosses to L., points at LADY ROOP, who is beginning to doze again*) Mary got hold of it first—wake up, Mary. (MISS P. *props MARY. RADDLES motions LADY R. to wake*) Her housekeeper was sister-in-law to the man who, at that time, was valeting Jim. This fellow left Jim's service to get married, and had little talks with his wife about his last master's doings. His wife in her turn had little talks with her sister, Mary's present housekeeper—wake up, Mary! (RADDLES *motions LADY R. again*) Mary's present housekeeper, I suppose, had little talks with Mary, because Mary had a little talk with me, and if only somebody had whispered a third of one of those little talks to Jane—

(MAN SERVANT *enters with tea urn, places it on table and exits.*)

well, my Lady Duncan wouldn't be out there this moment chatting on Jane's lawn.

MISS P. Hush! She's coming—and tea's up. (*goes to back of table c. General move to tables and chairs at back. LADY R. from down R. up to R. of table. LADY F. to front of table. MRS. HERRING R. of it*)

MRS. H. (*lifting lid of china dish*) They're always very sparing with the tea-cake.

RAD. The view I take is— (*below Mrs. H. L. C.*)

MRS. H. (*handing him a plate*) Bread and butter. (*he subsides and they all devote themselves to the meal at back, and the front part of the terrace is quite clear as LADY DUNCAN comes up from the garden by the step R. 2 E. on to the terrace. LADY D. is a petite, golden-haired woman with a very soft voice and caressing manner.*)

MISS P. (*serving tea on platform up c., sweetly*) You're just in time for tea, Lady Duncan. (*RADDLES goes to chair R. C. and moves it forward as if asking her to sit*)

LADY D. (*crossing to L. C.*) I timed it accurately. (*RADDLES has fussed about and offered her arm-chair R. C., motions chair down R.*) Down there, please—just in the shade. (*sits*) One more cushion, (*looking up at him. He gets it R.*) dear man. (*he gets cushion from chair R. C. for her feet*) So many thanks.

MRS. H. Wheels.

MISS P. (*at back looking over balustrade to L. H., she listens*) The dog-cart. Our host has come home. (*then she turns and smiles quietly to the others*) I think we expect developments.

MRS. H. (*excitedly*) Jim back again!

LADY R. More copy if I can keep awake. (*JIM heard inside house L. H.*)

JIM. Take 'em up to my room. That's all right. (*RADDLES goes up to table quickly and gets tea—it is given him by LADY R. He comes down a little to note meeting of JIM and LADY D. At the sound of his voice, LADY D. lifts her eyebrows in surprise and smiles; the OLD LADIES watch her covertly*)

LADY D. That's dear Mr. Greaves' voice, I'm sure.

(*JIM GREAVES, a handsome but somewhat weak-looking young man enters from house.*)

We haven't met for quite an age. (*JIM stands thunder-struck at seeing her*)

JIM. (*on platform L.*) You!

LADY D. (*sweetly*) How do you do, dear Mr,

Greaves? (*during this the LADIES and RADDLES have their tea cups to their lips as if about to drink and are watching the scene over them. On JIM's first "cake" the cups come down on the saucer with a bang and the LADIES get their heads together*)

JIM. How de do? What the deuce? Eh—what? I say, you know—

LADY D. You're just in time to hand me some cake.

JIM. (*feebly*) *Cake? (cups clash and the heads of the OLD LADIES come together over table. Exclamations from LADIES. He backs towards table and the OLD LADIES greet him cordially. RADDLES takes cake down)* Is there any cake? (*LADIES and RAD. greet him, "How d'ye do? etc." He takes cake down to LADY D.)* Here you are.

LADY D. It doesn't matter. I don't really want it. Jim dear, you've aged. Only these few months—or is it years—married—but you've aged.

JIM. I say, this isn't cricket, you know.

LADY D. You don't look really glad to see me. (*Miss P. sends RAD. for the cake*)

JIM. (*with a burst*) Look here, you can't stay here—my wife's a jolly good sort and all that—and—and—I say, you shouldn't have come, by gad! you shouldn't. Oh, damn these women! (*RADDLES comes down quietly and takes the cake dish from him and up again to table with it*) Oh, certainly.

LADY D. Jim dear, you were always lacking in a sense of humour.

JIM. How did you get here?

LADY D. Your dear wife—what a unique old lady, Jim—worked with me for a most deserving charity and we were mutually drawn to each other. I think she's so charming—you lucky man!

JIM. Look here—what's your game?

LADY D. Cards on the table, Jim?

JIM. Yes.

LADY D. Mr. Munkittrick is staying here, and he really doesn't know how to manage his millions.

JIM. You're not—

LADY D. I am going to marry Mr. Munkittrick.

JIM. When?

LADY D. Oh, I haven't settled that yet. The dear man is quite unaware of my decision. (*Miss P. moves R.*)

JIM. (*feebly*) Not a shred of decency—'pon my soul, not a shred.

LADY D. It's delicious to shock you, Jim; for an immoral young man, you have the strangest reverence for the conventional.

MISS P. (*at R. end of balustrade on platform off R. 2 E. Over balustrade looking below*) Aren't you coming to tea, Miss Marr? (*JIM moves up C.*)

BILLY. (*heard from below off R. 2 E.*) No, just going back to play the third set. I've beaten him twice. (*JIM moves up a little at the sound of BILLY's voice, looking off R.*)

MISS P. Such energy must affect your complexion. (*BILLY laughs*)

LADY D. Miss Marr. Oh, dear me, how I dislike that young woman.

JIM. (*coming down again L. of LADY D.*) Billy? Why?

LADY D. Because, unless somebody interferes, she has every prospect of marrying the sort of man I should have married ages ago.

JIM. Who's that?

LADY D. Jack Frere. I really must see that he doesn't throw himself away on Miss Wilhelmina Marr. Wilhelmina, the very name would lessen a husband's self-respect. I'm almost tempted to make love to him myself. (*MISS P. crosses to table*)

JIM. You ain't likely to catch Jack, if he's really in love with Billy.

LADY D. (*looking closely at JIM*) Someone else I know was in love with Billy—and yet I—

JIM. Oh, I always was a fool. What came off with me wouldn't come off with him. He has got leanin' towards the church and a moral or two.

LADY D. Has he, still?—at his age? I wonder why! Anyhow he's much too good for Miss Wilhelmina Marr.

JIM. (*quickly*) He isn't a bit. He's a thundering good fellow is Jack, but so's Billy, and it's a jolly good thing for her that you played the game you did with me, otherwise she'd have been married to me by now, and nice thing that would have been for a brick of a girl like Billy. Don't you interfere there—you marry old Munkittrick's millions—

LADY D. As you did Jane's.

JIM. Look here, ye know, my wife's a jolly good sort—don't you go calling her by her Christian name.

LADY D. (*sweetly*) She insists on it.

JIM. Not a shred, you know. Damned if you've got a shred. (*moves away to L.*)

LADY D. (*rises and follows him to C. He stops on hearing his name*) Jimmy, you were always a sportsman. I bet you a level fiver that Mr. Jack Frere does not marry Miss Wilhelmina Marr!

JIM. You be careful—Billy's my cousin.

LADY D. Appalling thought—don't be alarmed. I'll make her my dearest friend.

(Enter MAN SERVANT from drawing-room L. H. through window to steps, he sees JIM GREAVES. Seeing that he is talking to LADY D. he stops confused. LADY D. sees him.)

I think your man wants to speak to you. (goes up c. to table)

JIM. (L. c. crossing to him) Well?

MAN SERVANT. (top of steps L.) I can't get your things, sir.

JIM. (at foot of steps L.) What d'ye mean?

SERVANT. Mrs. Greaves had locked the door of your room, sir.

JIM. What! Where is Mrs. Greaves?

SERVANT. Inside the room sir.

JIM. Damn! (he bolts off through drawing-room, the MAN SERVANT following respectfully. A general rising at the table at back. LADY D. down c. MRS. H. down R. LADY R. down R. c. MISS P. down L. c. RAD. up L. c. LADY F. down L.)

MRS. H. One gets so chilly after food. It's the blood—has to go to the inside to help digestion, I've heard.

RAD. (sitting down at table c., in seat vacated by LADY F. My view of the matter is— (MR. MUNKITRICK heard calling from the grounds off R. 2 E. below terrace)

MUNK. (off R.) Is Lady Duncan with you, Mrs. Herring?

MRS. H. (from R. c. talking over balustrade off R. 2) Yes. (MISS P. to c. with LADY F.)

LADY D. (crossing to R. on terrace) Dear Mr. Munkittrick, I'm so sorry, but I couldn't have got through the afternoon without my cup of tea. (on platform R. c.)

LADY R. (down c. L. of arm-chair R. c.) You didn't have any.

LADY D. (shaking her finger smilingly at LADY R.) Ah—there speaks the journalist—always observant. I'm coming, Mr. Munkittrick, I'm coming. (she goes down steps to join MUNK. off R. 2 E. LADY R. sits in chair R. c. and sleeps)

MISS P. (L. c. coming down languidly with LADY F.) Oh, yes, Billy Marr's a dear, sweet girl, and of course none of us ever believe a word we say against her, but you do think she's heart whole now?

LADY F. (L. c.) I do.

MRS. H. (R. C. coming to C.) I don't. (RAD. listens to this for a moment and then seats himself up L. settee) There's that young man who is going into the church.

MISS P. Mr. Frere! (C.)

LADY F. (L. C.) Jack Frere?

MRS. H. (R. C.) Jack Frere? I quite sympathise with her. I always feel a little soft myself towards young men with broad shoulders and twinkling eyes—who—who—think of going into the church.

SERVANT. (off L. H.) Beg pardon, ma'am, I think—(LADY F. moves down to bench L. All turn L.)

MRS. G. (off L. H.) I tell you she is there! She is! (LADY R. wakes with a start. Voices raised excitedly heard)

MRS. H. What's up?

(Enter MRS. GREAVES. JANE first on to platform L. SERVANT in doorway.)

LADY R. It's Jane. (MRS. HERRING C.)

JANE. (on steps L. pointing off R. to servant) There she is out on the lawn with Mr. Munkittrick. Be quick! (servant crosses front of JANE and off R. 2. MRS. GREAVES was the widow of a prosperous alderman and looks it. Her manner is excitable, and she is somewhat inclined to be embonpoint. She speaks very abruptly. MRS. H. moves a little to L. C. On steps of house—coming down) Sorry to leave you good people so long, but I've been busy. (crossing to R.)

MRS. H. (crosses to L. C.) What at?

JANE. (C. marching up and down terrace C. in a condition of subdued excitement, turning C.) Ferreting.

RAD. Ferreting!

MRS. H. Jane!

MISS P. What!

LADY F. What!

LADY R. My! (RAD. rises, crosses to her, the others following a little)

JANE. Oh, don't fuss and get exclamatory. I've found out another of his little peccadillys. (crosses to R.)

MISS P. (crossing to C. then up to back of chair C., quietly correcting her) Peccadilloes, Jane. Peccadilloes. (RAD. laughs and sits up L.)

JANE. (R.) Same thing. (crosses to L. C.) I'm on the war-path. (she stops in front of LADY R. who has again dropped into a doze) Wake up, Mary! (MRS. G. shakes LADY R.)

MRS. H. (L. H.) Gracious, Jane, what have you found out?

JANE. (C.) Oh, nothing fresh to you. You all found

it out long ago doubtless. (*they all protest except LADY R. who is asleep. Then turning fiercely to LADY R.*) Wake up, Mary. (*MISS P. wakes up LADY R., who waves her hands about in a feeble dazed way, recalling her senses. C. going to her and speaking with great firmness*) Mary, I have found out—accidentally I sincerely hope, from my maid (*RAD. is very interested in this*) what your housekeeper heard from your brother-in-law, my husband's late valet, about a flat in Victoria Street.

OMNES. (*apparently astonished*) Eh?

JANE. (*turning L., hurling a scornful glance at them all*) Oh, I don't hesitate to discuss it before you all, my dearest friends. You've already discussed it threadbare among yourselves.

OMNES. No, no, I assure you.

JANE. (*folding her arms with a snort*) Well, all right, not threadbare. Such a theme could never get threadbare in the hands of one's friends.

LADY R. (*having partially collected herself, protests feebly*) But, I do assure you—

JANE. (*snapping round on her*) Don't assure me, because I know you know all about it, you know. Out with it, Mary

LADY R. Really, Jane, I'm just awaked from dozing, and I positively cannot recollect to what you refer.

MRS. H. (*L. C., very blandly*) None of us know to what you refer.

JANE. (*snorts and again looks round defiantly at them all*) Which of you knows the woman's name? Do you? (*to all of them in turn*)

LADY R. (*1st*) No!

MISS P. (*2d*) No!

RAD. (*3d*) No!

MRS. H. (*4th*) No!

LADY F. (*5th*) No! (*quite high and loud*)

JANE. Ha! Honour among thieves! (*they all protest "Oh, Jane, really"*) I don't mean that—at least, not while you're guests of mine. But you do know and you won't tell me. Very well—I daresay you're perfectly right. (*goes down*)

MRS. H. Have you?

JANE. (*turning on her quickly*) Yes, I have. I've cut off his allowance—every shilling of it. (*crosses to L. and goes up on steps L.*)

LADY R. (*to MISS P. who is below her—in great dismay*) Oh how will he dress at dinner? (*JANE moves towards the house L. H.*)

MRS. H. (*L. C., giving way and getting to L. C.*) Where are you going?

JANE. (*on platform L. Half way up the steps on her way to drawing-room*) I'm going to hunt through his papers. Flats must leave something behind 'em.

MRS. H. (*going towards her a little—aghast*) But, my dear—your husband's papers—

JANE. (*on steps fiercely*) I will. I've got 'em all out of his room. I pay the piper and I'll call my own tune.

(MAN SERVANT enters from garden R. 2 E. MRS. GREAVES turns quickly towards him. As she speaks all look at servant, then turn to her after his answer.)

Did you ask Lady Duncan to come to my room?

MAN SERVANT. (*on platform R. H.*) Yes, ma'am. She'll be with you in a moment. (SERVANT crosses round at back, on platform and off L. U. E.)

ALL THE LADIES. (*gasp out*) Lady Duncan!

JANE. Yes, why not? She's a woman of the world—keeps her eyes open. She used to see a good deal of Jim at that time. She may give me some clue as to whom the hussy was.

MRS. H. (*falls in chair L.*) Oh, Jane, Jane!

LADY F. Mrs. Greaves!

LADY R. Oh! (*MISS P. laughs, RAD. chuckles*)

JANE. (*turns to go*) What's the matter with you all? I tell you I'm going to prove this little affair once for all. I'll find out that woman's name or mine's not Jane Greaves. (*she goes excitedly into house L. H.*)

MRS. H. (*crossing to R. C.*) Well—did you ever hear—

LADY R. (*in arm-chair R. C. with a shrill chuckle*) Sent for the woman herself! (RADDLES silently chuckling all through this, rises and goes up C., sits at table and eats cake, as LADY D. enters)

MRS. H. (*R. C., greatly disappointed*) She'll never learn anything now.

MISS P. (*R. of chair R. C. equally disappointed*) Oh, doesn't it seem a pity.

LADY R. (*very cheerfully*) Oh, what a flare up there'll be if it all comes out.

MRS. H. (*sadly*) It won't. Lady D.'s as cute as a waggon load of monkeys, and thanks to Jane's stupidity, she's forewarned fore-armed. (*MISS P. to above chair*)

(Enter R. 2 E. LADY DUNCAN on to terrace, followed by MUNKITRICK, expostulating. LADY D. crosses to C. front of LADIES, MUNK. following. The three LADIES at R. C. observing)

MUNK. After I've been hunting for you all over the place.

LADY D. I'm so sorry, Mr. Munkittrick—but when one's hostess demands one's counsels and advice one must obey. (*the LADIES have their heads together till LADY D. is off*)

MUNK. (*with a clumsy attempt at gallantry*) I'll wait. (*turns to the three LADIES R. C. Talks to LADY R. first, then MRS. H., then MISS P. LADY D. runs up steps into drawing-room, meeting JIM. The expression on his face startles her. JIM enters L.*)

JIM. (*in doorway in a great state of agitation*) Something's up. My wife's been locked up in my room for hours.

LADY D. (*reassuring*) It's all right. (*crossing in front of JIM. Turning back*) She's going to confide in me! (*exit L. H. into house*)

JIM. (*perfectly aghast*) Not a shred of decency, upon my— (*he disappears quickly after her into the house. MUNK. joins RAD. up C., RAD. shows him photo*)

MUNK. Ha! ha! Old Jasper Philpots. (*sits*)

MRS. H. (R. C.) Mary, didn't you write a very curious little paragraph about a certain thing that happened to a certain lady—not unconnected with Sir Jasper Philpots?

LADY R. (*seated R. C.*) Oh, it was merely a suggestion. I knew none of the facts, but I knew all my friends would read between the lines.

MISS P. (*standing back of chair R. C.*) Ah, I knew what you meant in a moment.

LADY R. (*sadly*) Ah, I didn't till long afterwards.

(*Enter JACK FRERE cheerfully from drawing-room L. H. He stands on the steps and looks round smiling at the party below him.*)

JACK. (L. H.) If you can assure me that you're not talking scandal, I'll trust myself amongst you for some tea. (*MISS P. to stone bench. On word "scandal" the ladies separate, heads up*)

MRS. H. My dear Mr. Frere, nobody ever talks scandal nowadays— (*going up R. C.*) but Mr. Raddles has finished the tea cake. (*JACK comes down laughing. LADY R. rises and goes down to arm-chair R. H.*)

RAD. (C. at table up C.) My view of the matter— (*JACK ignores him*)

JACK. (L. C. crossing to C.) Anybody seen Miss Marr?

MISS P. (*down R. C., up a little R. C., points off R.*)

She's down there with Captain Becher. (JACK crosses to R. MUNK. joins MRS. H. and they go R. a little. Miss P. joins RAD. and then crosses down to R. to MUNK.)

JACK. (crossing to balustrade R.) So she is. (calls to her) I say, have you had your tea, Miss Marr?

BILLY. (from the garden below R. 2.) I'm coming.

JACK. Come and sit beside me—and protect me from Mrs. Herring—she's going to break out into scandal again. Even Munkittrick is looking nervous.

MUNK. (R. C. pompously) I must confess I like a bit of scandal.

MISS P. (R. C.) If it's piquant.

JACK. (up at tea table L. of it) And appetising. (RAD. crosses above table. BILLY enters followed by CAPTAIN BECHER. JACK gets some tea. BILLY sits in arm-chair R. C.) This is no place for us, Miss Marr, but if we want tea—

BILLY. (seated R. C., looking up at him as she takes the cup) We must grin and bear it. (MUNK. laughs)

JACK. (bringing down chair from up R. C.) I wonder could I reclaim you all if I stood up on this chair and poured out burning words? (MUNK. crosses to platform R. meeting CAPTAIN BECHER and RADDLES who goes up. They talk)

LADY R. (seated down R.) Your views of life are very serious, Mr. Frere.

JACK. (C. with mock gravity) Very—very serious. (Miss P. rises)

MRS. H. (L. C.) I've heard of your being seen with a lot of little children on the sands digging with a bucket and a spade. (Miss P. comes down)

JACK. (C.) Bar digging with the bucket, the report is substantially correct.

BILLY. (R. C.) I wish I'd been with you.

JACK. (C., L. of BILLY) I wish to goodness you had.

MISS P. (up C., watching them a little spitefully, sniffs) It may be so arranged next time. (there is a distant rumble of thunder and the sky begins to cloud over. All turn towards back cloth)

MRS. H. Thunder! (moving on to steps L. All the OLD LADIES rise, with ejaculations, and prepare to go into house. LADY F. first, then MRS. HERRING)

LADY R. (rising) Thunder! That's what's made me so dozy. (moves across to L. She hurriedly gathers her lace shawl about her) I must really go and write my little column "What we overhear—"

MRS. H. (on steps into house. Interrupting firmly) When we over-sleep. Come along, Mary—you're not

popular. (*exit into house and off L. followed by LAI R.*)

MISS P. Aren't you coming in, Miss Marr?

BILLY. (*rising, going R.*) No. I don't think it will be much. (*BILLY is now returning her cup to JACK, who takes it to table up c. MISS P. goes up on steps*)

RAD. (*to MISS P.*) My view of the matter is—(*MISS P. makes a movement of impatience and goes into house*)

MUNK. (*interrupting RAD.*) Play you billiards, Becher. (*going up steps. As MUNK. speaks RAD. turns on him furious. MUNK. seeing he has interrupted him begs his pardon in pantomime*)

BECHER. (*stopping L. c. To BILLY and speaking nervously*) You won't forget your promise, will you, Miss Marr?

BILLY. (*on platform R. c. vaguely*) Promise?

BECHER. (*a little embarrassed*) After your letters are written, you know. (*lights begin to work up slowly*)

BILLY. (*quickly, with a smile*) Of course, I won't, Captain Becher. (*BECHER nods delighted, and follows MUNK. into drawing room L. H. and off L.*)

JACK. (*c. after a pause, looking at sky*) You're quite right, it's not going to be much. (*Pause. She looks over terrace balustrade R. then JACK says, looking with a smile at BILLY*) I'm very glad they're gone, aren't you? (*down L. c.*)

BILLY. Why are you? (*turning towards him*)

JACK. I'm always expecting 'em to make my blood boil. Fancy old Lady Roop being the authoress of that scurrilous column of lies.

BILLY. She sleeps so much—she must get paid for her dreams, or she'd starve.

JACK. My goodness, if you had only heard 'em yesterday.

BILLY. And before you too!

JACK. Very disgraceful, wasn't it?

BILLY. Almost a clergyman.

JACK. I'm not almost a clergyman, but I will be some day. (*to her a little*) You don't take me seriously enough. Whenever I tell you the sort of life I've mapped out for myself, you turn up your nose and sniff. (*BILLY seats herself in arm-chair R. c. facing JACK.*)

BILLY. (*putting down racquet*) Let's go over the principal points and attractions of your future life again. Little country church, little country garden;

you with a large book in one hand and a little garden hose in the other, being religious and domestic.

JACK. No—no. Not domestic—oh, no. I'm never going to marry, 'gaust my principles for clergymen to marry. (*sits c.*)

BILLY. Yes, so you told me the first time we met.

JACK. So I did. I think I only just got hold of that principle then.

BILLY. And I thought it was so sweet of you. It made matters so much simpler for us poor weak women.

JACK. (*pulls up chair*) Did it?

BILLY. Of course. We all knew exactly where we were as regards you at once.

JACK. (*pulls up chair—thoughtfully*) Yes, I suppose you did. It's a safeguard to have definite principles.

BILLY. (*demurely*) It must be.

JACK. Now that's one of the great advantages of being a poor man—if one had money—there—there wouldn't be the smallest necessity to have beautiful principles like that.

BILLY. (*gravely*) Ah, it must be a terrible loss to be rich.

JACK. (*acquiesces with a solemn nod*) Ah, indeed.

BILLY. Look at Mr. Munkittrick.

JACK. (*rises, goes L.*) Oh, don't talk to me about that man; I cannot stand him.

BILLY. He's very much in love, poor dear.

JACK. Who with?

BILLY. Lady Duncan.

JACK. (*scornfully*) Not he.

BILLY. He is, really.

JACK. (*going to her again*) He can't be. He was discussing her in the smoking room in a very casual way, last night.

BILLY. (*sitting up amazed*) He was! Oh, the—the— (*words fail her*)

JACK. Cad—that's just what I said to myself.

BILLY. (*with great conviction*) Oh, if any man pretending to love me discussed me with his men friends, I'd never speak to him again.

JACK. (*over back of chair*) Oh yes, you would if you loved him.

BILLY. (*very vehemently and firmly*) I wouldn't—I wouldn't. Nothing would induce me to.

JACK. No man who really loved a woman would allow for a moment that anything she did could admit of discussion.

BILLY. (*quickly*) I'm sure of that!

JACK. Least of all in the smoking room.

BILLY. (*rises and goes to R. on platform*) Well, you'll see he'll marry her anyhow. (*she goes up to walk and looks over the distant country*)

JACK. (*stands watching her*) I often wonder who you'll marry. (*BILLY doesn't turn towards him, still stands gazing into the distance*)

BILLY. Do you?

JACK. (*goes towards her R. below chairs, nods then says softly*) I wonder would you do me a great favour.

BILLY. (*turns to him, smiling gently on him*) I wonder. What is it?

JACK. (*quite near her—with a little touch of sentiment*) It would make me very happy.

BILLY. (*impulsively, coming nearer to him*) I will, of course.

JACK. Be—be—be—married in my church, when I've got one.

BILLY. (*sniffs, looks up at him, and turns away with dignity*) Certainly, I will. (*goes down R. below platform*)

JACK. (*following her*) I shall be very lonely in it all by myself.

BILLY. (*R. takes up racquet*) There *might* be a congregation.

JACK. (*R. c. sadly*) Oh, yes, there might be—but I'm pessimistic. I remember writing a sermon once, and when I read it aloud to myself, I was quite sorry I was present. (*looking off R. 2 E.*) Here comes Harry the misogynist.

BILLY. I don't believe such a thing exists. (*crossing to L. he follows, moves towards drawing-room*)

JACK. (*c. looking after her*) Going?

BILLY. (*stopping L. c. near steps*) Yes.

JACK. (*pleadingly*) Come back soon—and—and—do me another favour—think of the awful loneliness of my future.

BILLY. (*turns to him*) What shall I do when I come back?

JACK. (*to her*) Let me talk to you quite—quite seriously for ten minutes.

BILLY. All right. (*moves to L.*)

JACK. (*L. c.*) And promise me solemnly that all during that ten minutes you won't fidget or—sniff—or turn up your wicked little nose.

BILLY. (*on steps*) I promise. (*up to door*)

JACK. (*sighs and looks at her tenderly*) Will you do me another favour?

BILLY. (*in doorway*) Perhaps.

JACK. I've got three sisters at home, and I haven't got one here. I do miss them so. Will you be a sister to me, in—*in private?* (*coming to foot of steps*)

BILLY. (*leaning forward from top of steps*) A—a—half sister I'll be—in private.

JACK. Thank you, Billy. (*he gives a little gasp as he gets it out*)

BILLY. Don't mention it—Jack. (*starts to go again*) *She too gets out the Christian name with a little gasp,*

JACK. (*with a burst*) Do you know if it wasn't for you, I should lose sight of all my principles.

BILLY. (*in window, quickly with meaning. Leaning across pillar*) Would you—all?

JACK. (*at foot of steps*) I would.

BILLY. Even the one about not marrying?

JACK. Even that one.

BILLY. (*tossing her head*) I must be a plain little cat. (*exit into house. She goes out as SIR HARRY comes up the steps the other side R. 2 E.*)

JACK. (*L. c. looking after her*) What does she mean by that?

SIR H. (*on platform R.*) It's a jolly good thing for you, Master Jack, that your visit is drawing to a close and that you sink back into a country mouse again—(*coming to R. c.*) these surroundings aren't healthy for a young man who wants to preserve his illusions by becoming a parson.

JACK. (*coming to c. with a little laugh*) I'm learning what to avoid.

SIR H. (*coming forward R. c.*) Then you're a slow learner. Why, you're always at the skirts of some woman or other.

JACK. I'm not. I hardly speak a word to any of 'em, except—Lady Duncan—and—and—

SIR H. Mrs. Herring, and Lady Roop and Miss Marr and three or four of the others. That was Miss Marr went in there, wasn't it?

JACK. Yes.

SIR H. (*seating himself arm-chair R. c.*) She's a nice girl.

JACK. (*enthusiastically*) She is!

SIR H. (*seated R. c.*) She's been engaged four times.

JACK. (*c.*) Has she?

SIR H. Is that because she's a nice girl or because she isn't?

JACK. Because she's a nice girl of course.

SIR H. Ah, that point admits of argument.

JACK. (*to chair R. c.*) You're a pig-headed, caustic, soured old bachelor.

SIR H. Well, don't crow, you never mean to marry.

JACK. I don't, but that doesn't blind me to the fact that the fairest and most beautiful thing on God's earth is a young woman—

SIR H. Who has been engaged four times?

JACK. (*enthusiastically*) That's not her fault. That's the youth on her. That's not vice. That's the voice of the spring, old man; that's the young blue eyes turning heavenward to seek its mate—and—

SIR H. (*scornfully*) Young blue eyes—Christopher! Of all the ridiculous similes that ever I heard—I quite understand why your people selected the church for you.

(MAN SERVANT enters, comes down steps crosses to JACK on cue.)

JACK. (*a little dashed*) Yes, that wasn't a very good one, was it? But you're a wet blanket, Harry. You must allow she's— (*rises. Footman hands telegram to JACK*) For me? (*He takes it, reads it once, twice, then gives a gasp and puts his hands through his hair and stares at it. A pause. He turns to SIR. H. FOOTMAN exits at once, c.*) Read that! (*sits in chair facing HARRY*)

SIR H. (*reads it and gives a long whistle*) He's very old, isn't he?

JACK. Awfully old.

SIR H. (*looking at him solemnly*) By Gad! You'll be a baronet with £10,000 a year— (*rises returning telegram*) And as a matter of principle you sacrifice all the happiness you might get out of it to lead the placid life of an unmarried country parson. (*takes his hands*) It's noble of you—'pon my word it is. (*he starts off down terrace steps R. 2 E.*)

JACK. (*rises, stands glaring at the telegram, then he suddenly shouts after SIR HARRY*) Come back!

SIR H. (*R. c. returning*) Well?

JACK. (*very gravely*) I don't think a man who is a baronet and has £10,000 a year has any right to have any principles at all. Do you?

(BILLY enters in drawing-room and looks for book in cabinet.)

SIR H. (*equally grave*) P'raps you're right.

JACK. (*c.*) Principles belong to the poor. Why should the rich man have everything—it seems selfish.

SIR H. (*looking off into drawing-room*) There's Miss Marr. I'm off—talk it over with her. (*upon platform going R.*)

JACK. (*quickly*) Certainly not. My thoughts on the subject are not sufficiently mature.

SIR H. She could help you to mature 'em. (*exit down steps R. 2 E.*)

JACK. That's not a bad idea. (*puts telegram in his pocket, goes up towards drawing-room side window and calls*) Miss Marr—

BILLY. (*from room*) Yes?

JACK. Who's in the drawing room?

BILLY. (*coming to side window*) Only me. (*leaning out*)

JACK. (*changing his tone to one of great tenderness on finding they're alone*) Oh, Billy, come out. (*down stage to foot of steps*)

BILLY. I can't come out now. I'm busy.

JACK. (*below window*) I don't care. (*then with great delight, almost awe as he looks up at her and whispers*) Oh, Billy, you are a—

BILLY. (*doorway. Smiling down at him from top of steps*) A what?

JACK. (*below steps*) A—a—just a dear—that's all; do come out here—it's—it's cool and lonely.

BILLY. I can't. Captain Becher—is at the present moment waiting to play me billards in the billard room.

JACK. (*smiling up at her*) I don't care!

BILLY. And Mr. Durrant is waiting under the copper beach on the lawn to show me how to mend punctures.

JACK. I don't care.

BILLY. And Lady Duncan has offered—

JACK. I don't care.

BILLY. You don't seem to care for anybody, do you? (*a pause, she looks at him archly*)

JACK. (*solemnly—backing away*) Ah, it didn't come off that time, did it? (*she sniffs. c. Still looking up at her*) You're not keeping your promise, you know. You promised me ten minutes serious talk—and that during those ten minutes, you would neither fidget, sniff or turn up your silly little nose. We've not been here a minute and a half and yet you've done all three.

BILLY. (*coming down steps haughtily*) The nose is physical; the fidgeting is constitutional and the sniff slipped out. (*down L. front of stone bench*)

JACK. Is that an apology—or an admission?

BILLY. Both. (*sits*) Shall we begin the serious conversation. (*he comes to sit alongside her, sees there is no room; she sees what is the matter and makes room for him*)

JACK. (*as if going to commence a long dissertation*). I told you I was going into the church.

BILLY. Yes.

JACK. I told you that I regarded the step as a vitally serious one.

BILLY. Yes.

JACK. I told you that I had rigid ideas on the subject of young men who go into the church.

BILLY. Yes.

JACK. The great one being that they shouldn't marry. *(she sniffs—a pause—he looks anxiously at her)* You sniffed.

BILLY. *(apologetically)* It slipped out.

JACK. Then hold your breath till I've done, it puts me off. I told you I had all these definite and rigid ideas.

BILLY. *(demurely)* Yes.

JACK. I told you all this ten days ago.

BILLY. Yes. And you've kept on repeating it up till ten minutes ago.

JACK. Yes, that's because I always like to remember what my views are.

BILLY. I understand.

JACK. Well, I'm having this chat with you—this serious chat with you now to tell you—*(pause)* To tell you—I've got all these principles still. *(a pause—he again looks at her anxiously)* Did you sniff?

BILLY. *(hotly)* No.

JACK. *(a little disappointed)* Oh! *(a pause)* You might have sniffed then, I'd have passed it over that time.

BILLY. The ten minutes *must* be up.

JACK. Not at all. There are seven minutes more. *(a pause)*

BILLY. *(resignedly)* Well?

JACK. Well, I've got those principles still—but I begin to wonder if I've any right to them. *(takes telegram from his pocket, looks at it)*

BILLY. Oh dear!

JACK. Influenza—is a good deal more serious than it sounds. *(pause—they look at each other—he is standing C., she seated L.)* Ever hear of my uncle Joseph?

BILLY. *(indifferently)* I may have.

JACK. Sir Joseph Frere, Baronet, of Frere Court, Hampshire.

BILLY. *(as if duly impressed—bowing)* Oh, I have.

JACK. He had cut all the respectable members of his family for years.

BILLY. *(with increased indifference)* Oh!

JACK. I include myself.

BILLY. Oh!

JACK. (*telegram in hand all the time*) He has got the influenza.

BILLY. Oh!

JACK. I am his nearest relative.

BILLY. Oh!

JACK. (*slowly*) Influenza often leads to complications unless one is careful.

BILLY. Oh!

JACK. (*coming a little nearer to her and speaking very solemnly*) Uncle Joseph—from what I have heard—I can't speak from personal knowledge because I never met him—Uncle Joseph is never careful.

BILLY. Oh! (*JACK sits. Pause. He is looking straight at her, pointing to telegram*)

JACK. And he has got the influenza.

BILLY. (*slowly*) Well?

JACK. I told you, I still tell you I have very definite and rigid ideas about life, but it's obvious that influenza followed by complications may upset the most definite and rigid ideas of life.

BILLY. (*edging up to him with a little laugh*) Ah!

JACK. I only mention it because I thought it would be a relief to you to know that my case is not quite so hopeless as—as—we have allowed ourselves to believe—

BILLY. Oh! (*away from him again. A pause*) Is the ten minutes up?

JACK. Is they? They is not. Turn your nose down. (*rises and goes to window and back. A long pause and he blurts out*) Billy, will you marry me?

BILLY. (*pause to recover her breath. Looks quickly up at him, then rises with a great assumption of dignity*) No, thank you.

JACK. (*rising, puts telegram in pocket—greatly taken aback*) You won't marry me?

BILLY. (*crosses to R. above chairs, haughtily*) Certainly not.

JACK. But—but—oh, you can't mean that?

BILLY. (*upon terrace—with a light laugh*) Can't I? I can.

JACK. (*following to C., but greatly distressed*) But you must have a reason?

BILLY. I have many.

JACK. (C.) Tell me one.

BILLY. (*turning fiercely to him*) One is, I never was proposed to in such a casual way before— (*down off terrace to R*) it's most unmanly.

JACK. (C. *completely taken aback*) Unmanly! Casual! (*then very earnestly—goes to her*) Oh, if you

only knew how I feel inside about it, you wouldn't call it casual—it was shyness that made me put it like that. Oh, Billy—I—I'm—I'm awfully in earnest, dear—do—do—say you'll marry me.

BILLY. (R. *shortly—turning her back on him*) No!

JACK. (R. C.) But what's to become of us both if you don't?

BILLY. (R. *her back to him*) You will, I hope, go into the church and remain single—while I will marry a man who takes life seriously.

JACK. (R. C.) I do take life seriously—awfully seriously. (*softly*) Oh, Billy, think again. You wouldn't drive me back to my first principles, would you? You'd never sleep at night—if you sent me away to some lonely parish to preach; you'd say: "There's that poor fellow out there preaching to people, breaking his heart and cracking his voice all because I was a wicked little girl. Because, though I loved him all the time, I wouldn't have him. I sent him away because he was poor." (*he goes c.*)

BILLY. (*turning on him quickly*) I didn't, Jack—how dare you say that? It's unkind—

JACK. Oh, Billy—the—the influenza is in the air—influenza and complications—don't send me away from you like this.

BILLY. (*going towards him c. Breaking into a smile*) You don't keep serious long, Jack. (*with a glad laugh he catches her hands in his*)

JACK. Not to-day—to-day isn't a serious day, is it dear?

BILLY. Jack, you mustn't call me dear.

JACK. Can't help it—you are a dear—just a dear—aren't you a dear, dear?

BILLY. A great many people have tried to convince me that I am.

JACK. (*ruefully*) Yes, that's the worst of it.

BILLY. (*snatching her hands away and backing from him R.*) What do you mean by that?

JACK. You told me three days ago that you thought you were a flirt.

BILLY. Yes, I am a flirt—you wouldn't have fallen in love with me if I hadn't been.

JACK. Yes, I should.

BILLY. (*moving away towards arm-chair R. c.*) No, you wouldn't. If I weren't a flirt, I shouldn't always be so sweet and lovable, and it's only my being always sweet and lovable that makes people fall in love with me.

JACK. How many people have fallen in love with you?

BILLY. (*sitting on arm of chair*) Oh, heaps and heaps—There was Mrs. Brigstead, the bishop's wife, Old Miss—

JACK. I don't count the females.

BILLY. And I don't count the males, so we'll change the subject.

JACK. Have you ever been engaged?

BILLY. (*a dismayed gulp of alarm*) Er—well—(*she sits in chair*)

JACK. (*moves down L. and then comes back to her*) I won't press it. Have you ever been in love?

BILLY. (*slowly*) Only once, and then only nearly.

JACK. (*quickly, to her*) Who was he?

BILLY. (*rising—half-laugh—half serious—turning from him down R. C. a little*) He's the only one I won't tell you about.

JACK. Then he's the only one I want to hear about.

BILLY. That's just like a man, always trying to make trouble. Shall I tell you of some of the others? Some of my really most thrilling flirtations. There was General Whitefield—he was a sweet—I tell you.

JACK. No, tell me about this other chap.

BILLY. No—that's too serious to rake up—(*crossing slowly to L.*) That's my romance.

JACK. (*quickly*) Billy!

BILLY. (*checking him*) You're very inquisitive.

JACK. I have a right to be.

BILLY. What right?

JACK. I love you.

BILLY. (*getting rather sentimental over her recollections*) He used to say that.

JACK. (*eagerly*) Did he love you?

BILLY. (*sitting on arm of stone bench L. H.*) No, I don't think he did.

JACK. Are you sure?

BILLY. (*interrupting—softly*) No, not quite sure—but sometimes we were very happy, very—very happy. You see we were very young.

JACK. What was the fellow's name?

BILLY. (*who is really quite sentimental now*) I made up a pet name for him.

JACK. (*a little annoyed*) Oh, indeed—I suppose he did the same for you.

BILLY. Yes. (*pensively*) He used to call me Wang, so I used to call him Toodles.

JACK. (*moving R. a little*) It was a brilliant rep-
artee!

BILLY. (*gravely—contemplating space—her thoughts far away in the past*) Was it? Looking back on it it seems rather ridiculous to call a real grown man "Toodles" in cold blood—it seemed different then somehow.

JACK. (*coming c. getting worried*) Are you serious? Really serious?

BILLY. Yes—Jack—quite—I'd have married Toodles then, and I should have regretted it all my life.

JACK. Why would you have regretted it?

BILLY. Because, Jack— (*a pause—she rises, looks at him then with a little choke she holds out her hands to him and whispers softly*) Oh, Jack, you know.

JACK. Billy! (*with a glad cry he catches her impulsively in his arms and kisses her. A long pause—she remains happily where she is—his arms round her—her head on his shoulder—then he whispers very tenderly*) You won't regret marrying me, will you Billy?

BILLY. (*whispers it to him*) Never, Jack.

JACK. Never, never, never, Billy?

BILLY. Never, never, never, Jack. (*he kisses her tenderly*)

JACK. And you'll never, never flirt with anybody any more?

BILLY. (*fervently*) Never.

JACK. (*putting her at arm's-length and holding her hands*) Swear.

BILLY. I swear. (*then with a sudden recollection she backs away from him a little dismayed*) Oh, Jack, the Fancy Ball is on Saturday.

JACK. (*anxiously*) Yes.

BILLY. P'raps it would be safer if I didn't go. I might break my swear.

JACK. Billy!

BILLY. (*pleadingly*) Oh, Jack, think of it. (*coming towards him a step*) The Fancy Ball, Jack.

JACK. (*a little worried*) Yes, I realise that.

BILLY. (*going quickly to him and putting her hand on his arm*) Jack, promise me one thing—word of honour as you love me. Keep our engagement a dead secret till Sunday, and we'll pretend we're not engaged till the Ball is over, and—you can ask me to marry while we're sitting out the last extra and I'll say yes—and then we'll be engaged and that's four days off and in those days we can— (*backing away from him*)

JACK. (*breaking in very cheerfully*) Both finish off any little affairs we may have on hand.

BILLY. (*taken aback*) Oh, Jack, you haven't got any—

JACK. (*triumphantly*) Yes I have, I've got three.

BILLY. (*looking at him in surprise*) Oh Jack, I've only got two. (*then coaxingly*) I must finish them off—it's no good letting them run on, is it?

JACK. And it's quite impossible to finish them off before the Fancy Ball—beside that will make such a picturesque finale. Captain Becher melts into tears during the barn dance, and the other little man hopped out of his happiness during a polka. What a triumph.

BILLY. (*looking up at him*) A bargain, Jack, (*extending her hands to him*)

JACK. A bargain.

BILLY. (*with a little sigh of contentment*) I'm so glad, it's such a pity not to finish things one has begun so well.

JACK. (*after a pause during which he looks at her with almost breathless delight and admiration*) Oh, Billy, what a—what a— (*he stops short*)

BILLY. What a what—

JACK. What a witch you are— (*then he catches her to him again and breaks into a laugh of pure happiness*) Billy, Billy, I haven't a principle left. I could hold you in my arms like this for ever and dream and dream and dream. Oh, my sweetheart, think of it. You and I all our lives together, one forever and forever—

(*Enter CAPTAIN BECHER, through drawing-room to window, followed by LADY DUNCAN.*)

Hullo, Becher! (*JACK breaks from her before BECHER sees their attitude*)

BILLY. (*with an air of great contrition going toward window*) Oh, Captain Becher, I'm so sorry, but I've been so awfully busy. (*to JACK*) Excuse me, (*goes over to foot of steps*) I said ten minutes, didn't I, just to give you time to brush the table, chalk my cue and collect yourself.

CAPT. B. It's all right. I've done all that. Have you finished your letters?

BILLY. (*puzzled*) Letters!

CAPT. B. You said you wanted to catch the mail.

BILLY. (*quickly*) Oh, yes, thanks. I've caught him. (*exit BECHER. She throws a laughing glance at JACK, who kisses his hand to her unseen by BECHER. She goes out smiling into house* L. LADY D. comes to window. JACK sees her, says very cheerily)

JACK. Hullo, Lady Duncan. (*on steps*)

LADY D. (*in window, looking at him in amazement*) My dear Mr. Frere, what has happened?

JACK. (*backing away* L. C.—*surprised*) Eh!

LADY D. You look fearfully—distressingly radiant.

JACK. (*with a laugh*) I am radiant.

LADY D. Do give me your prescription. (*coming down from window and down steps*)

JACK. There isn't one.

LADY D. (*crossing to arm-chair R. c.*) There must be. What has happened to you? (*sits in arm-chair R. c.*)

JACK. Oh, Lord, I should love to tell you. I should love to tell everybody.

LADY D. Oh, do be content with me—tell everybody and nobody wants to hear. Tell me—if—if—if it's a real secret. (*sits in arm-chair*)

JACK. (*back of his chair c.*) And everybody hears whether they want to or not—I beg pardon, I don't mean that.

LADY D. I should hope not.

JACK. (*bursting to tell*) I—I (*then suddenly, sits facing her—taking out telegram*) Uncle Joseph's got the influenza.

LADY D. (*with an assumption of the intensest interest*) Really.

JACK. Yes— (*a pause*) With complications.

LADY D. (*sympathetically*) Poor dear.

JACK. Not at all, he's got other things besides. Twelve thousand pounds, a baronetcy, a place in Hampshire. I'm his only heir. I've never met him, don't care a—for him—so I—Oh, I don't wish the poor old boy any harm, but he's eighty odd, I'm thirty odd, and my word! I—I'm sure I hope it'll turn out for the best for him, don't you?

LADY D. Most heartily.

JACK. (*shaking her warmly by the hand*) Thank you. I knew you would, you always were a good sort.

LADY D. Jack. I—I call you Jack—because—well—Jack suits you and everybody calls you Jack, and—I've known you quite long enough.

JACK. One week.

LADY D. And am quite old enough to do the same as everybody else does.

JACK. Certainly—call me Jack. Look here, I've a jolly good mind to tell you something. (*he looks round to make sure they are quite alone*) Swear you'll not mention it. (*draws chair nearer*)

LADY D. Of course I won't

JACK. Well—don't you see! If Uncle Joseph should by any chance—well if he were to—you understand. I should be in a very different position from that I'm in now. And of course—it was no use thinking of getting

married on my present income. Falling in love one can't help— (JIM enters) we mustn't be blamed for that, must we?

(JIM GREAVES enters from window of house L. H. and shows both surprise and displeasure on seeing the two talking so earnestly.)

JIM. (on platform L.) Hullo!

JACK. (turning in his seat) Hullo!

JIM. (looking from one to the other suspiciously). You two seem very chatty.

LADY D. (laughing up at JIM) Mr. Greaves, don't forget you owe me five pounds.

JIM. What!

LADY D. (pointedly) Our bet—now do go away. I'm listening to Mr. Frere.

JIM. (after a quick look at LADY D. Jack, can you tell me where Billy is, Miss Marr I mean?

JACK. Yes—she's in the billiard room with Becher.

JIM. You've not won, Lady Duncan. The race isn't run yet. (he goes into the house and off L.)

LADY D. (putting her hand on JACK's arm says softly) Oh, Jack, that was cruel of you!

JACK. What d'ye mean?

LADY D. In the same breath that you say people aren't to be blamed for falling in love, you tell Mr. Greaves that Billy is in the billiard room with Captain Beecher.

JACK. (surprised) Well?

LADY D. You should not have told him that. You really have no tact.

JACK. What d'ye mean?

LADY D. (lifting her eyebrows and shrugging her shoulders) My dear Jack, you know perfectly well that Billy and Jim Greaves, in the old days before he fell a victim to our poor dear Jane's banking account were— (she stops as if loath to speak)

JACK. (looking at her fixedly) Were what?

LADY D. (with much meaning) Cousins!

JACK. And are still!

LADY D. (with a long sigh and a shake of the head) I'm afraid from what I hear they are.

JACK. Lady Duncan!

LADY D. (again lightly touching his arm) No, no. You and I mustn't talk scandal, let's leave that to our elders.

JACK. I—look here, Lady Duncan.

LADY D. No, no, I'm sorry I said that—do let's talk

of something else. I've just had a most distressing interview with his wife on the very subject.

JACK. What subject?

LADY D. (*as if very much distressed*) Oh my dear Jack, Jane has been so foolish—she's been rummaging in desks that don't belong to her—found all sorts of old letters—why do you men keep letters?

JACK. What letters?

LADY D. Letters from Miss Marr to her husband.

JACK. To Jim?

LADY D. Thank goodness for all concerned, poor dear Jane hasn't the remotest notion who wrote them—they are signed with a nickname, and, really can't help smiling when one thinks how indiscreet young people are, one of these delightfully naïve letters is distressingly conclusive.

JACK. Don't talk rubbish. (*turns away from her*)

LADY D. My dear Jack—do not please look so melodramatic. Such things do occur, you know—and I really think everyone takes them far too seriously.

JACK. (*rising—bursting into a laugh*) Great Scotland, what are you women made of? (*rising, and down L. C.*)

LADY D. I don't understand.

JACK. (*L. C.*) To pretend to believe such rot about a girl like Billy.

LADY D. (*rising and following him*) My dear Jack—when a human being falls in love with another human being the laws and customs of the world count for very little. Billy Marr is a delightful little girl, but—

JACK. (*turning to her—shortly*) Miss Marr has promised to be my wife.

LADY D. (*making a quick movement from him*) Jack!!! (*a long pause, during which they stare at each other—then she continues in a low, constrained tone*) And you allowed me to tell you all this! How could you! (*crosses down R.*)

JACK. (*goes up L. and then down again*) How could I! I like that! How could I help it—don't worry, Lady Duncan. I know Billy and I know, too, that the man she marries has every right to be the proudest man in the world.

LADY D. (*slowly and in a low voice*) Jack, what can I say—I'm more grieved than I can tell you. I merely repeated what I've just learned from Jane—those letters.

JACK. (*scornfully, crossing to LADY D.*) Letters—do you really suppose for one minute she wrote them? (*up L. and down again*)

LADY D. (*quickly*) No, I don't suppose she did. (*meeting him c.*) Oh, Jack, if Jane should try to take you into her confidence and show them to you—don't let her. Oh, it's so difficult to explain what I mean—but keep out of it. Oh, I shall never forgive myself and I know you can never forgive me—you the last man in the world who should have heard of this. (*crossing to R. and sitting in arm-chair down R.*)

JACK. Pardon me, (*crossing to her*) the first man to hear of it. Poor old Billy—What a shame! (*then almost fiercely turning to her*) You don't mean to tell me that Mrs. Greaves—

LADY D. Mrs. Greaves knows nothing—she's got the letters, but the signature conveys nothing and she doesn't recognise the writing!

JACK. Well—what the— (*then suddenly grasping the situation*) Oh, I see, what you mean—you think you do recognise the writing.

LADY D. (*with an assumption of great distress*) No, Jack, no, really I don't.

JACK. You must have or you wouldn't have said all you said just now. (*JACK walks quickly up and down*)

LADY D. I—well—I thought I did, but I see now how wrong I was. Oh Jack, don't think of this again—please don't let Jane consult you on the matter. Oh, I shall never forgive myself for my stupidity.

JACK. (*coming to c.*) You didn't mention to Mrs. Greaves the fact that you thought you recognised the writing.

LADY D. (*rising and coming to JACK*) Oh, Jack, how could you suppose I should be so mean as to give the poor child away! Of course no person, man or woman, who knows Billy could think for a moment there was one word of truth in this. And, Jack, I promise you I'll do my best to persuade Jane to go no further into the matter.

JACK. Eh?

LADY D. (*looking at him with tenderness—sighs*) Ah! you'll never know—you'd never realise if you did know how deeply sorry I am to have said to you of all people what I inadvertently said just now. Is it too much to ask you to shake hands and forgive me? (*putting out her hand to him*)

JACK. (*shaking hands coldly*) My dear Lady Duncan, I suppose none of you ladies who laugh away each other's reputations mean any real harm.

LADY D. Thank you, Jack, of course we don't, and this time I didn't really. Let's forget all about it and I—(*crosses L.*) I'll go and get my hair waved with a clear

conscience. (*goes up steps and turns to him*) You will try and forget my foolish tittle-tattle, won't you?

JACK. (*quietly*—R. C.) Yes.

LADY D. Thank you, Jack. (*she goes out into the house, meeting JIM to whom she speaks in passing. Goes above him this time*) I'm bound to win. (*exit L. H.*)
JACK goes up C.)

JIM. (*speaking after her. Shortly*) Oh, no, you're not. (*comes down steps to L. C.*)

JACK. (*c. to himself, fiercely*) What cats some women are. Well, did you find Miss Marr? (*comes down a little*)

JIM. Yes, but as that ass Becher was there it was no good, so I've written her a note. I say, old man, give it to her for me, will you? I can't wait, I'm off to town. (*JACK takes it, JIM crosses to R. 2.*)

JACK. Sudden departure. (*putting note in his pocket*)

JIM. (*on terrace R.—with a gasp*) I should think so. (*starts to go*)

JACK. (*c. looking at him enquiringly*) Anything up?

JIM. (*putting his hand through his hair with a groan*) Phew! rather!

JACK. Can I be of any use?

JIM. (*on platform—turns quickly*) By Jove—that's not a bad idea. Yes—you might do me a devilish good turn. Will you?

JACK. Of course I will.

JIM. (*returning to JACK R. C. eagerly*) Well, look here. (*he looks at his watch*) Yes, I've just time to explain—you know I'm not saying anything against my wife—she's a jolly good sort and all that—

JACK. She is—

JIM. But—but—well, she's not so young as she was, I s'pose, and that makes her rather touchy on the subject of—of—

JACK. (*quietly*) Other ladies.

JIM. Yes—and—well, look here, she—I'm hanged if I think she plays the game fairly, mind you I'm not saying a word against her—she's a jolly good sort.

JACK. You said that before.

JIM. Well so she is—she's a jolly good sort—but—but hang it, Jack, she shouldn't bribe my man Jenkins to get hold of my keys and go rummaging through all my old papers, should she?

JACK. No, she shouldn't.

JIM. She shouldn't—she's a jolly good sort and all that, but she shouldn't—well—she has—she's been at it

now, and there's a devil of a row. She's found out some damned thing or other. I can't quite find out what—and—and—she's cut it off again you know.

JACK. (*very gravely*) You don't say so!

JIM. If I could only find out *what it is* she's found out I might be able to tell her all about it—because she is a jolly good sort and all that; but if I don't know what it is she knows, how the devil can I stay and face it out, I can't—can I? (*crossing to R.*) So I'm off to town—when I run away—it seems to soften her a bit—because she's fond of me, she really is, I know that well enough, and when she writes and says, come back and talk it over, of course I come back (*crosses back to JACK*) as soon as I can, because I'm awfully fond of her in a way, she's such a jolly—(*moves R. a little*)

JACK. (*rather impatiently*) Yes—yes—but what's the row about now?

JIM. (*coming back to JACK*) Well—it's devilish difficult for me to tell you. I—of course it's all about a woman.

JACK. (*grimly*) Of course.

JIM. I'm such a silly ass—you see. This woman—of course you understand it all happened before I was married—and of course just my luck—she's a great friend of my wife's—my wife's awfully fond of her and all that, she's such a jolly good sort, fond of everybody, and the devil of it is she is staying in the house now.

JACK. (*quickly*) Who is?

JIM. The—er—the lady! (*JACK makes a movement of protest*) Not my doing, on my honour. I'm flabbergasted—but what has my wife found out this afternoon—that's the point—what has she found out? You must find that for me—she is bound to confide in you—she thinks because you're going to be a clergyman you should be confided in. Then you write me—if she only knows a little I'll come back and confess to the little and it'll be all right; if she knows the lot—

JACK. (*after a pause*) Was there a lot?

JIM. There was a good deal.

JACK. How much?

JIM. (*with a nervous giggle*) Well, p'raps I oughtn't to say. (*looks at watch*) By Jove I must bolt or I'll miss the train! (*goes up on terrace—turns*) The reason I'm bolting so quick is because I'm such an ass she might get me into a hole and worm it out of me. She's a jolly good sort and all that, of course, but she's a oner at worming, and I get flustered. Good-bye, old chap. Good—(*he hurries out R. 2 E. JACK stands for a moment lost in thought—motionless—takes out en-*

velope and looks at it, then puts it back quietly into his pocket)

(MRS. GREAVES *enters the drawing-room in a great hurry. Rings bell, then fidgets all round the room—sees JACK standing c. quite motionless. She comes out to him.*)

JANE. (*on steps, coming down*) Oh, Jack, there you are—now don't go worrying and upsetting me, I've got sufficient worries and upsets of my own (*moving up and down L. C.*)

JACK. (*a little astonished at the charge*) Really! I've neither spoken nor moved.

JANE. (*down L. C.*) Well—that's sufficient to agitate an old woman who's nerves as it is are all on the whizzle.

JACK. I beg your pardon.

JANE. Whizzle—whizzle.

(MAN *enters from house L. 2 E.*)

Where's your master?

MAN. (*on steps*) I'm unaware, my lady.

JANE. (*L. C.*) Catch him—and if you do—shut him in his room—don't let him escape you, he's as slippery as an eel. (MAN *bows and exits L. 2 E.*) There, look at that now—how can they respect their master when I say things like that. Poor dear—Oh, Jack, I'm a foolish woman, but that man's a wretch. I took him when he hadn't a shoe to his back, I've dressed him—I've—I've—well I've done lots of foolish things. Never you mind, I've allowed him a thousand a year. I've—I've—but mind you, I've cut it off—

JACK. (*C.*) So I've been given to understand.

JANE. Not a penny of my money goes into that flat. (*goes down L.*)

JACK. What flat?

JANE. (*up to JACK C.*) Victoria Street—who could believe it? Virtuous buses all down the middle—but flats on either side. Oh, Jack, I wish I'd married you—You tend to holy thoughts and peace on earth—we'd have suited each other. I should never have found these in your bureau. (*she waves a packet of papers*) Love letters, Jack, love letters—from a preposterous person, with a preposterous name—and worse, Jack—worse—that establishment—that flat—under my nose, since he married me. Read it, read it. Can you wonder that my nerves are whizzling. Read it!

JACK. (R. C.) I never read letters that are not meant for me.

JANE. (L. C.) Don't you? I do. You're going to be safely shut up in the church. I've got to wrestle along outside—so I do what I can to keep on top. Listen, "Dear Jimmy, please don't think I'm grumbling; as you prophesied the flat will suit both our requirements to a T. But I don't agree with you about the ceiling paper in the pantry or the passage—we'll change them, it won't cost much." And the preposterous epistle is signed "Wang."

JACK. (*with a gasp*) What?

JANE. Wang I said, Wang! That's the other love bird, Wang!

JACK. Let me see. (*he takes it and recognizes at once that it is Billy's writing—there is a pause*)

(LADY D. enters and goes to window.)

JANE. (*turning towards house as indicating they are there*) Lots more of 'em—only the others are all love and treacle—lots more of 'em. All Wangs—all in the same writing. Do you recognize it?

JACK. (*slowly*) No! (*he gives her letter, she turns and sees LADY D. entering*)

(SIR HARRY enters up steps R. 2 E.)

JANE. (*turning to LADY D. at window*) Oh, there you are. I've told him all about it as you advised.

(BILLY comes in quickly from drawing-room L. 2 down steps and crosses to JACK. MRS. G. down L. to bench. MRS. HERRING enters and goes to cabinet. LADY ROOP to above table, MISS FERROT to top of steps, LADY FAIRLEIGH behind her.)

LADY D. (*in window*) Oh, don't say that.

BILLY. Oh, Jack, (*softly*) Jack, our little plan's upset. I had to tell Captain Becher—he would propose.

LADY D. (L. C. *watching* JACK and BILLY) Miss Marr looks as if she had had good news.

BILLY. (*looking, laughing at LADY D.*) I have. (*then she turns shyly to JACK*) Won't you tell them Jack? (JACK *standing staring straight in front of him, his face set and stern*)

LADY D. And Mr. Frere as if he had had bad.

BILLY. (*distressed at the look on his face—holds out*

her hand to him) Jack—Oh Jack. (he turns and looks at her—there is an awkward silence. JACK crosses BILLY over to his right side)

JACK. (suddenly tossing back his head—with a burst of laughter) I don't believe it. I love you, dear. (the OLD LADIES are startled and move to the two windows) I love you (he catches BILLY in his arms and kisses her. Exclamations of astonishment from every one. "Mr. Frere! Jack! Miss Marr!") Looking round rather abashed) I beg your pardon. I only want to tell you Miss Marr has promised to be my wife.

QUICK CURTAIN.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—A comfortably furnished room—half library, half smoking-room. Large fireplace R., with heavy oak mantel to ceiling. On either side of it bookcases let into wall, also from floor to ceiling. At back of room long windows, heavily curtained. Fender seat round fire. These windows open on to the terrace.

DISCOVERED.—SIR HENRY HARMON lying R. C. in deep club chair, his feet on fender seat before fire, reading the "Globe." On small table beside him, cigars, whiskey and soda, etc. After a pause, JACK enters door L. 2 E. disconsolately, sees SIR HENRY.

JACK. (gloomily) Hullo. (goes up to table L. gets cigarette, crosses to table R. and lights it)

SIR H. (without looking up from his paper or taking his cigar out of his mouth) Hullo. (JACK above table R.) Where's our host?

JACK. (not attending) What?

SIR H. Where's Jim?

JACK. Gone to town, then on to Paris.

SIR H. Oh—more broils?

JACK. I suppose so.

SIR H. Ah well, your turn will come soon.

JACK. (moving to below table L. C. sits on edge of it) What d'ye mean?

SIR H. I gather from your somewhat theatrical outburst on the terrace this afternoon over Miss Marr's fringe net that you ultimately desired to marry the young lady.

JACK. You were quite right. (SIR H. grunts. JACK comes to table near SIR H. and helps himself to a whiskey

and soda. *A pause*) I don't suppose you ever were in love.

SIR H. I don't suppose I ever was—have a look at the "Globe"?

JACK. Hang the "Globe"!

SIR H. *(calmly)* Those tin mines weren't a rig after all, you see.

JACK. Weren't they?

SIR H. They weren't. *(Pause)*

JACK. I suppose they all thought I was mad *(takes a drink)*

SIR H. Eh?

JACK. This afternoon.

SIR H. It may have struck some of the more conventional present that it was not quite the usual method of announcing an engagement.

JACK. I don't care. *(moves to L. of table. This is the first time HARRY has looked at him. He turns his chair and does so here.)*

SIR H. The fact that you have won the lady of your choice does not seem to have turned your spirits to the note of song—anything wrong?

JACK. *(shortly)* Yes. *(sits L. of table)*

SIR H. What?

JACK. Other people are such brutes.

SIR H. Eh!

JACK. Especially other women.

SIR H. *(sinking back in his chair)* Let me recommend you to cling to the latter part of your statement all through your married life. It will preserve your wife from chloral.

JACK. *(rises, goes up to L. of SIR HARRY)* Women can't be as bad as they try and make one believe.

SIR H. Can't they? I shouldn't trust 'em. Bah! Don't talk about them. I'm prejudiced. I always believe the evil I hear of 'em and take the good with a grain of salt.

JACK. *(crosses to R., flinging himself into an arm-chair down R. H. Gravely.)* There are some women you can't believe evil of. You wouldn't if you could.

SIR H. "Wouldn't if you could!" that frame of mind belongs to the "Knight in armour" period, not the analytical.

JACK. Then for heaven's sake let's get back to the "Knight in armour" period. I'm sick of all this backbiting and scandal and yow-yow. You're a damned good chap in other respects, but in this you're as bad as the rest. You're always sneering at women. Men should be above that. *(rises, crosses to chair R. of table C.)*

SIR H. Of course we should—but we aren't. It's a cultivation like other modern mannerisms.

JACK. *(sits)* We believe that men are honourable,

most of 'em—Why shouldn't we believe the same of women?

SIR H. They make it practically impossible for us.

JACK. How do you mean?

SIR H. They tell us so much about each other.

JACK. (*rises and goes down L, then back*) One shouldn't believe what they tell one.

SIR H. One doesn't—so one's faith in the majority of the women one listens to is at once destroyed. From your demeanour I gather that some fair lady in the course of conversation has been treading on your corns.

JACK. (*goes to SIR HARRY*) Infernally.

SIR H. Lady Duncan, I suppose?

JACK. (*down to R. of table, sits*) Indirectly—yes. Well now, look at her. What is a man to believe? I thought she was one of the jolliest, manliest women I'd ever met.

SIR H. Ah, the pink and yellow ones are very deceptive, I've sampled them.

JACK. She seemed such a good sort, seemed to see things so straight that to-night, when Mrs. Herring told me the things she had been saying about, about—

SIR H. (*still in arm-chair R. C., gently*) About Miss Marr.

JACK. (*rising crossing to him*) How did you know I was going to say Miss Marr?

SIR H. (*looking at him gravely*) I think I must have guessed it.

JACK. Well, if she did say those things—she ought to be pole-axed.

SIR H. Of course she ought. Most women of her age, views, experience and colour ought to be pole-axed regularly.

JACK. Look here, have you ever heard her say untrue things about Miss Marr?

SIR H. I don't know about "untrue." I couldn't say.

JACK. (*angrily*) Ever heard her say *unkind* things?

SIR H. Oh, often!

JACK. *Wicked* things.

SIR H. Heaps.

JACK. (*comes down L. stamping*) I—I'd brand such women!

SIR H. Waste time. They do that for themselves.

JACK. (*crossing to R., bursting into an angry laugh and flinging himself into the arm-chair again, down R.*) But after all, what does it matter—who ever paid any attention to Lady Duncan?

SIR H. Lots of men during her husband's lifetime.

JACK. That's not the sort of attention I meant.

SIR H. It's the only sort she cares about—and poor dear, it gets annually more difficult to obtain. Her life's been a bit of a failure.

JACK. I don't pity her.

SIR H. She does pity you—you've fallen in love with some one else. *(there's a pause. JACK puts his head back and stares at the ceiling)*

JACK. *(suddenly)* What have you heard her say about Jim and Miss Marr?

SIR H. I never said I'd heard her say anything about Jim and Miss Marr.

JACK. Oh, don't talk rot. *(rising and sits on fender facing SIR H.)* She did say things about Jim and Miss Marr, didn't she.

SIR H. Well, as a matter of fact she did.

JACK. To-night?

SIR H. Oh, not quite so recently. I think two days have elapsed since she convinced me of the iniquity of anybody.

JACK. *(bitterly)* Well, she'll have plenty to talk about now.

SIR H. You don't mean to say Miss Marr has given her anything definite to lay hold of?

JACK. I—I'm afraid she has.

SIR H. *(sitting up)* Jack!

JACK. There's nothing in it of course—we who know Billy know that, but these devils of women put two and two together and make it 202. *(rises and throws away cigarette)*

SIR H. *(slowly—chewing end of cigar)* Jim's bolted to Paris.

JACK. Yes, the fool.

SIR H. Did he by any chance tell you his reason for bolting?

JACK. Yes—in confidence.

SIR H. So he did me—in confidence. He told us both, so I shan't respect the confidence; let's tell each other.

JACK. What did he tell you?

SIR H. *(slowly—still chewing his cigar)* He told me his wife had found out something about himself and a certain lady—he mentioned no names—I gathered his wife can't identify the lady—but Jim let fall she was a visitor in the house at present—which is odd—and master Jim, dreading, lest under wifely cross-examination, he should betray the lady's identity, bolts—till the storm blows over.

JACK. Yes—that's pretty much what he told me. *(a pause)* It's no good beating about the bush. Lady Duncan has been confided in by Mrs. Greaves and thinks she knows the lady.

SIR H. That I also gathered; she was spreading a thinly veiled version of the story before dinner. I'm sorry now I didn't stop to listen.

JACK. *(horrified)* She's spreading it already!

SIR H. What's the proverb? "Chat while the scandal's hot." Oh, it will be pretty useful for the lady.

JACK. It's damnable—perfectly damnable! (*crosses to R. of table—sits*)

SIR H. (*quickly*) Can she make much of the story?

JACK. For once; she need have no limit. Oh! If one could only get at the truth—it would be as clear as daylight.

SIR H. Of course it would. What's the old woman got hold of?

JACK. A bundle of old love letters!

SIR H. But old love-letters, not since the marriage.

JACK. (*slowly*) One of 'em I can't quite make out, refers to the occupation of a flat in Victoria Street—since the marriage. (*SIR H. gives a long whistle. Rises and goes to SIR H.—bursts out*) What the devil do you mean by that? She and her mother must have taken on the end of Jim's lease. (*moves c. a little*) Oh, Harry, I'm so damned miserable.

SIR H. (*staring at him in surprise*) But you don't believe—

JACK. Believe—God forbid—but if these women won't be convinced, what's to be done then? It's damnable—(*to window, looks out*) She's the truest, sweetest, honestest little girl that ever breathed, and if any one dares to think these lies are true, I'll—I'll—(*in his anger he bangs the table with his fist, rattling glasses*)

SIR H. (*quietly*) You'll upset the glasses? (*JACK down L. and back*) Don't plunge about like that. Sit down, old man, and let's see exactly what's happened.

JACK. (*fiercely turning on him*) Nothing ever did happen—you may take your oath on that. Harry—you've seen her—you've looked into her eyes—you've talked to her—you don't believe—(*leaning on back of SIR H.'s chair.*)

SIR H. Believe that Billy Marr—(*he stops*) I'm not quite a fool.

JACK. (*heartily*) Thanks, old man—(*shakes hands with HARRY across back of chair*)

SIR H. (*holding his hand—after a pause*) Do you know what I should do if I were you?

JACK. What?

SIR H. I should go to her—tell her all you've heard, and, as her future husband, claim the right to clear the matter up.

JACK. She might think I doubted her.

SIR H. Convince her you don't doubt her, but unless you know what the truth is how can you let other people know it?

JACK. But—but—oh—it would break her heart to know such things are being said of her.

SIR H. You'll have to risk that. Better a broken heart (*releases hand and goes to chair B. of table*) than a broken reputation. My dear Jack, it's the wisest course. Go to her—tell her all about it—get her to explain it to you now, once and for all, and then you can talk to anybody that has anything to say on the subject.

JACK. (C.) I will, by gad, you're right. (*to SIR H.*) I'll tell her all about it and— (*down L. A pause, he thinks it over then breaks out excitedly*) By gad, you're quite right! (*goes up*) I'll go and talk it over with her quickly (*starts for door L. 2 E.*) and we'll shut the mouths of those beasts before they've had time to open them.

SIR H. The young generation is previous.

JACK. (*pausing thoughtfully at door—hand on knob—turns a little glumly to SIR H.*) I say, you know—it—it isn't as easy as it sounds—how on earth shall I begin?

SIR H. Ah—um—yes—It is a little awkward.

JACK. (*returning—comic hesitation—anxiously*) Er! can't you give me a sort of lead—just the opening part? I think I shall be all right when I've once started—(*comes slowly back to C.—crosses back to table*)

SIR H. (*with a ghost of a smile hovering on his lips—closes his eyes and says, thoughtfully*) Well! I should just ascertain that she is sitting somewhere in a room quite alone.

JACK. (C.) Now is it likely that Billy would ever sit anywhere alone?

SIR H. It must be arranged—better begin by drowning Becher.

JACK. Oh, be serious.

SIR H. (*continuing very gravely*) Then when you've found her in the room quite by herself—enter gravely—and pause—then without a word turn and solemnly close the door—that will tell her at once that something's in the wind.

JACK. Yes, I think that's good—(*draws chair B. of table to SIR H. sits in it*) Go on—

SIR H. Then cross to fireplace—cough—put your hands behind your back and say—er—er—my dear Miss Marr—

JACK. (*rising and replacing chair, leaning on back of it*) You're an ass, Harry. Oh, I wish it wasn't so difficult—I suppose it's because I'd lay down my life for her that I—I can't say things I mean to her.

SIR H. Wait till you've been married a year or so—you'll chatter pretty freely to her then.

JACK. (*goes to chair in which HARRY is seated, leans on back of it*) Oh, bless her, I hope so. (*then enthusiastically to HARRY—hands on back of chair*) Harry, won't it be splendid when we're married?

SIR H. (*very seriously nodding his head*) It will be

absolutely marvellous! Nothing like it since the world began.

JACK. You think you're chaffing me, but you're talking truth—there'll be nothing like it since the world began. I'm jolly glad I told you about everything, old man. You've been a lot of good to me. (*giving hand to SIR H., who takes it. There's a light tap at the window at back L. C. Three taps—*JACK, SIR H., *staccato movement with same*)

SIR H. What's that? (*a pause*)

JACK. Some one at the window. (*moving to C. looking at window L. C., they pause again listening. Then the three taps are heard again, and JACK goes up, flinging back curtains, peers out on to terrace*)

SIR H. Any one there?

JACK. Can't see. (*he opens the long windows. There's a light burst of laughter, and with a shout of "Billy" JACK catches her by the arm and pulls her into the window*) Got you! Miss Madcap!

SIR H. By Jove, you are shy.

JACK. I am, this is mere bravado. Come in, come in.

(SIR H. *is about to rise*)

BILLY. (*imperiously—still in window*) If you get an inch out of that comfortable chair, Sir Harry, I shan't come in.

SIR H. Then I don't stir. (*sits again—facing them*)

BILLY. (*coming into room—to C.*) Jack dear, I know I shouldn't be here, but I heard your voice and I saw through the chink you were only with Sir Harry—I wanted you to see this. (*she hands him a note*)

JACK. (R. C.—*looking at it*) The note Jim left for you.

BILLY. Yes, read it. (*he reads it, then looks at her astonished*) Isn't it funny?

JACK. (*gravely*) Very funny; may I keep it?

BILLY. Of course.

JACK. May I read it to Sir Harry?

BILLY. If you like. (*moves down C. L. of table L. C. and sits L. of it*)

JACK. (*reads—over to SIR H. R. C.*) "Dear Billy, Lady Duncan's got her knife into you—watch her—she means mischief—show this to Jack if you like. I'm off to Paris on important business. Yours, Jim."

SIR H. (*whistles*) Rum!

JACK. Very rum.

BILLY. Very—very rum—she's been so nice to me this evening—(*a pause—they all look at each other—then BILLY suddenly rising*) Well—well I must go—or I shall be talked about by those sweet old women. You don't get away into a corner and wallow in every little bit of talk you hear, do you?

SIR H. (JACK and SIR H. exchange guilty looks) Certainly not.

BILLY. I must go (*moves up a little*)

JACK. (C.) Oh, wait two minutes.

BILLY. (*hesitates, then casts a tender little glance at JACK*) Well, put your feet back on that ledge, Sir Harry, I'm sure they were there before I tapped, weren't they, Jack.

JACK. (C.) They were certainly there.

BILLY. Put 'em up, Sir Harry.

SIR H. Up they go. (*he puts his feet back on the fender seat*)

BILLY. Now take a sip at your whiskey and soda, and on these conditions I'll stay here for two minutes. Which is your chair, Jack.

JACK. (C.) I wasn't sitting. I—I was walking up and down.

BILLY. (*leaning on R. edge of table L. C. with mock dismay*) Oh, Jack, don't tell me you're of a serious turn of mind in the smoking-room.

JACK. Not often—but—but—but one's got to think about things sometimes.

BILLY. Of course one has. I think it's very good for one to have a good go in at oneself, only you shouldn't walk up and down, that weakens the goodness

JACK. (C.) What should one do?

BILLY. One should find out the coldest room in the house and the one with the ugliest paper, and then one should take one's chair like this. (*she takes chair from R. of table up C. to the wall and sits facing it, her knees almost touching it—JACK follows her up and stands R. of her*) And one should get right up against the pattern like this, and then one should start thinking how awful one is and what a pity it is that it's quite impossible to be any nicer than you are. Then when you've thought that well over and quite realised that you can't be nicer than you are, you feel a little better and you can come away from the ugly pattern and go and look at yourself in the glass. (*turns chair to L. and kneels on it, leaning over back of it to JACK. SIR H. had been writing with his pencil on the margin of the "Globe"*)

SIR H. (*rising*) I wonder how many words you use in the course of the week, young woman?

BILLY. (*coming down with JACK*) Do I talk too much? I'm so sorry.

SIR H. Not a bit—(*calls JACK—hands the "Globe" to him—BILLY takes it but does not look at it*) That's the account I told you about.

JACK. (R. C.—*blankly*) What account?

SIR H. You know—at dinner—ahem! If you two will

excuse me I'm off to the terrace for a breath of fresh air. (*crosses up L., JACK is quite unconscious that SIR H. has written anything on the "Globe" SIR H. at window L.*)

BILLY. (*C. cheerfully*) Sir Harry, you've been writing something impertinent about me. How dare you! (*SIR H. motions JACK to get the paper. She reads the lines and at once her whole manner changes. Quietly*) What's this? Don't go, Sir Harry. (*SIR H. stops awkwardly at window L. C. and is greatly embarrassed—tries to attract JACK'S attention—who moves R. a little. Reads aloud, very quietly though firmly*) "I'll clear out. Get her to explain everything once for all, better too soon than too late." (*there is a fearful pause, she turns and stares at SIR H.*) You wrote this on the margin just now?

SIR H. (*coming down*) I did.

BILLY. (*turning with white face to JACK*) Jack, what is it you wish me to explain?

JACK. (*very much distressed and at a loss what to say*) Nothing, Billy.

BILLY. Then what does Sir Harry mean?

JACK. (*R.*) I—I don't know—at least I—I do know.

BILLY. (*with a little shake in her voice*) Then you were discussing me when I came in?

JACK. No—no, not discussing—Oh, Billy, don't look like that. This is all it was. Look here—we—we've heard a certain story and—(*then quickly*) we don't believe it, of course, but—but if ever it got generally known it would be beastly for you—and I—we—well, we were trying if there was any way of stopping it going the round of those old women.

BILLY. (*reads again quietly*) "Get her to explain everything, once for all. Better too soon than too late." (*looks at SIR H., L.*)

SIR H. I assure you, you put the wrong construction on those words.

BILLY. (*drops paper on table L.C. upper side.—In a hard voice looking at JACK*) What have I to explain once for all?

JACK. (*R. C.*) Nothing whatever really, only we, at least I was turning the thing over with Harry to see if we couldn't do something, and we came to the conclusion I'd better go straight to you and find out all the facts—don't look so angry, Billy, something has to be done, really.

BILLY. (*C. quietly*) You're quite right, something has to be done, and it's very simple. (*she takes off the ring JACK gave her and puts it on table L. C.*) Thank you, Mr. Frere. (*exclamation from both as ring comes down. Then scornfully, quoting his words of the afternoon*) "No man who really loved a woman would allow for a

moment that anything she did could admit of discussion, least of all with other men in the smoking-room."

JACK. Oh, my dear girl, do listen—

BILLY. (*waving him back from her, laughs a little sadly*) I have—you've made some marvellous discovery about me—I've made another about you. It's a very good thing after all—much better too soon than too late. (*she moves towards door—crossing in front of table to L. HARRY down L.*)

JACK. (*crosses above table—getting between her and the door—deeply distressed tries to detain her*) Billy—Billy—

BILLY. Let me go, if you please. (*JACK falls back a step—with great dignity she passes between the two men and out of the room. JACK tries to follow her—SIR H. detains him*)

SIR H. (*very much upset—turns to JACK*) My dear chap—

JACK. Oh, go to the devil!

SIR H. (*firmly*) Don't go after her now. It's no good talking to a woman when she's in a temper. Sit down. (*SIR H. forces him into a chair. L. of table L. C. putting him across in front of himself*)

JACK. (*trying to free himself from the detaining hands*) Sit down be damned—let me go to her—

SIR H. Wait un hour—she wants to cry it off—wait till she has—they can listen to reason then—

JACK. (*trying to rise*) But I won't have her cry—why should she cry?

SIR H. (*pushing him back*). Because she's a woman, because she loves, because she thinks you're a cad.

JACK. (*rising and taking stage—to R. front of table*) I am a cad. I'm an infernal cad and it's all your fault. (*HARRY says "What?" Coming up to table*) What do you mean by your idiotic scribbles on the "Globe?" Why in Heaven's name couldn't you have held your tongue? (C.)

SIR H. (L. C.—*speaking across table*) How was I to know you were going to besuch a juggins as to let her get it?

JACK. How the devil was I to prevent her when I didn't know it was there?

SIR H. I made a signal.

JACK. Signal be—she saw it, I didn't. Oh, of all the blunderheaded—(*turns away*) Look here—if—(*turns back*)

SIR H. (L. of table) It'll blow over.

JACK. (*across table*) "Blow over." (*SIR H. sits*) What difference does it make to you if it blows over or not? "Blow over"—suppose it doesn't blow over, what then—suppose she goes and—and gets engaged to somebody else—what then? Suppose that fellow Becher comes along again? "Blow over!" What the devil do you carry a pencil for if you can't control it! (*down R.*) O

course she's furious—she's every right to be furious. I couldn't blame her if she married anybody at all after your behavior to-night (*up to table*) "Get her to explain everything once for all" indeed—when all night I've been cramming it down your throat that there was nothing on earth to explain—Oh! go to blazes you and your "blow over!" (*goes up C.*)

SIR H. (*crosses to R. of table—banging it*) But my dear chap—

JACK. (*L. of table—also banging it*) I tell you that girl's the sweetest, best heartedest, honestest girl in England. I don't care if she wrote fifty letters to Jim—I'd swear they didn't mean anything but high spirits and—and—going for the laughter and glory of life wherever it was to be found. I'll tell her all about it and beg her pardon. (*HARRY takes R. up stage. He dashes out L. 2 E. MRS. GREAVES screams*)

JACK. (*off*) Beg pardon—didn't see you.

MRS. G. (*off*) Didn't see—you nearly pushed me over!

(*The doors are flung open and MRS. GREAVES, with reticule and letters, enters followed by LADY DUNCAN L. 2 E.*)

MRS. G. (*to C. panting vigorously*) He's positively banged the breath out of my body.

LADY D. (*L. H.*) But—my dear Jane—

MRS. G. Oh, my dear, do not keep saying "My dear Jane" it gets into my pulse. (*puts reticule on table*) Where's the lawyer man—(*up C. looking about room—HARRY moves down R. C. LADY D. stands L. of table*) barrister, I mean, I beg his—Oh, there you are, Sir Harry. You'll excuse me taking up your valuable time, you never do anything but smoke, so don't say you won't excuse me, for I'm going to. Lady D. told me to tell Jack all about it. Sorry I did. He was no good—he's much too tender to criminals, so he should be I s'pose with the church looking before him—but you're the law, and he's the church, and if the pair of you can't right me I'm in a bad way.

SIR H. (*R. C. a little taken aback*) Do you wish—?

MRS. G. (*C. interrupts*) Yes, I do. I'm going to discuss my troubles—it's the only thing I think worth discussion just now. You're all here feeding on the fat of the land—my land—and all I say to you is to take a little interest in me.

SIR H. (*a little offended*) My dear Mrs. Greaves—

MRS. G. (*waving her hands*) Oh, I know, I'm sorry—I shouldn't say that. I don't mean it, but you'll help me (*towards him a little*) like a good fellow, won't you? An old woman feels lonely—and besides it's good for you. Sir Harry, it may teach you if ever you get a foolish old woman to marry you—to be a little kind to her sometimes

and not go "wanging" all over the place at every opportunity. Where are my papers? Oh, here—*(she has a large reticule. She brings chair forward from back of table—sits—opens bag and takes out papers—puts bag on floor)*

SIR H. *(R. down stage)* But I fear I'm rather out of place—*(LADY D. at back of table L. C.)*

MRS. G. No, you're not—you were a barrister before your poor aunt's money made a man of you. You just sit down and listen to me. *(SIR H. sits in arm-chair below fire. JACK bursts in hurriedly L. 2 E. speaks before seeing women)*

JACK. She's locked herself in—*(he sees them and stops confused)* Hullo!

MRS. G. Who's locked herself in—where?

JACK. *(lamely)* Er—Mrs. Herring.

MRS. G. Ah, she's been overeating again, poor dear. Now for it! Jack, sit where I can see you. *(indicating sofa down L.)* It helps me to control my language.

LADY D. *(at back of table L. C. who has been watching them, says with an air of great surprise)* Surely this is Miss Marr's engagement ring—she showed it to me at dinner. *(a pause—she has taken it from the table where BILLY placed it and holds it up)*

JACK. *(L. quickly taking it from her)* By Jove, yes. I must put that in my pocket. I've got to have it made smaller. What was the shop I was ordered to go to, Harry?

SIR H. *(rising rather nonplused for the moment)* Oh, that place in Bond Street, you know.

JACK. *(cheerfully)* That's the place—what is the fellow's name?

LADY D. *(c.—suggesting smiling)* Charbonnel and Walker's.

JACK. That's the chap.

LADY D. *(with a smile)* Their chocolate is the best in London. *(look between JACK and HARRY, then she becomes very curious and going to JACK says to him softly, with great concern, SIR H. sits again lower R. C.)* Oh, Jack, this isn't because of what I said to-day? Oh, don't let her past spoil her future. *(JACK begins to speak)* Hush—

MRS. G. *(R. of table, LADY D. comes to L. of table and sits, JACK up R. C.)* Now, Lady Duncan, I'm nearly ready for 'em. I'm sure you needn't stay here, my dear. I've got all I can out of you and if I've told you once, I've told you twenty times I hate females to mix 'emselves up in my troubles. *(JACK moves up C.)* A man or two's a help, but women have no staying power, they chuck you just when you want to rely on 'em. You want to see the rest of the letters. *(JACK comes down back of table)* Don't scowl, Jack. I've showed her lots. She thought she recognised the writing but couldn't put a name to it, so I'm going to show her all

to jog her memory. Here's a harmless one for a wonder—
only a tennis party.

JACK. (*back of table and speaking very earnestly*) Mrs. Greaves, you took me into your confidence against my will surely this story will be better discussed, if discussion is essential, quite between ourselves.

MRS. G. Not at all—no hole-and-corner business for me. Not at all. I'm going to let all my friends and my husband's friends know how badly I'm being treated. Have a jolly good flare and when the flare burns out say no more about it.

LADY D. (*touching JACK's arm*) Oh, Jack, you might trust me a little!

MRS. G. Give her the letter, Jack, it isn't a glu-glu one. (*she hands the letter to JACK, who hands it on to LADY D.*) JACK goes down L. She glances at it. Anxiously to LADY D.) Recognise that one? (*a pause*)

LADY D. (*she looks at JACK, sadly returning the letter*) No! (*JACK down L. sits on sofa*)

MRS. G. (*with a snort*) Then I must fall back on the law. Now then, Sir Harry, this is my case. I heard this afternoon that my husband, prior to his marriage with me, had a flat in 135 Victoria Street where he—well—entertained a Wang.

SIR H. (*somewhat astonished*) I beg your pardon.

MRS. G. (*firmlly*) A female by the name of Wang. Oh, I've got all her letters.

SIR H. But prior, to your marriage—

MRS. G. Most of 'em—not all, as I tell you there's one later—objecting to the wall paper in the pantry and finding fault with the ceiling, just as if she was his lawful wife, and that's a Wang as well—isn't that a proof? (*enter BUTLER L. 2 E. closes door. MRS. G. sits up angrily and faces him*) Oh, my gracious—can't I be sacred in the smoking room? What is it?

BUTLER. Miss Marr's compliments, ma'am, and are you likely to be disengaged soon? She would like particularly to speak to you.

MRS. G. Tell Miss Marr to come in to me here. I can't say how long I'll be before I'm out of this.

BUTLER. And the person has arrived, ma'am, in answer to your telegram, and wants to know when you'd be pleased to see him.

MRS. G. Arrived! has he? Show him here, when I ring—show him here. (*exit BUTLER L. 2 E. shuts door*) Sir Harry, you'll stand by me. Jack too. Now we'll get at the truth of things.

JACK. (*L. of sofa anxiously—rises*) What person has arrived?

MRS. G. Sit down, Church. (*JACK reseats himself*)

on't let the cigar out, Law. (SIR HARRY *puffs quickly ated R.*) I'll show that husband of mine that when I take up my mind to find out a thing, I find it out.

JACK. What have you done now?

MRS. G. I've found out the way, and I've got my thumb in the hussy (LADY D. *rises and goes to table*) that shared that flat with Jim as surely as my name's Jane Greaves. (LADY D., JACK and SIR H. *all betray their interest, "How? How?"* HARRY and JACK *half rise*) Oh, I've got my bomb-shell for Master Jimmy and his Wang. Ring the bell, Sir Harry, we'll have it in. (*picks up bag*)

(BILLY *enters L. 2 E. Leaves door open and comes quietly to MRS. G. SIR H. rings bell R. H. LADY D. goes up to window L.*)

BILLY. (*pointedly avoiding noticing JACK's pleading glances. He rises on her entrance, she crosses to table L. C. L. of it*) I'm so sorry to bother you, Mrs. Greaves, when you're so busy, but I've just had a letter from mamma. She—she's very ill—she wants me to go to her.

MRS. G. My dear! Not serious? (JACK *sits again*)

BILLY. Oh no, but—it—it's lonely for her to be ill amongst all those friends in Paris—so I thought I'd better go. I'd like to go to-night, I could catch the ten express. (JACK *never takes his eyes of BILLY*)

MRS. G. Of course—what you think best, child.

BILLY. (*flushing*) But—but it—it's this—that I want to speak to you about, it's awfully awkward, but—but I can't go—I—I've no money at all—not a sixpence. My allowance is a week overdue. They must have forgotten to send it. Will you—

MRS. G. (*breaking in impulsively*) Lend you twenty, my dear? Of course. Wish it were a hundred. (*takes notes out of bag*)

BILLY. Oh no, five will be heaps, really. I thought I should have had some to-day but—

BUTLER. (*announcing*) Mr. Hagson! (LADY DUNCAN *starts in horror*)

LADY D. Hagson! (JACK *watches her*)

MRS. G. (*putting notes on table—proudly*) My bomb-shell! He valeted Jim in the flat, and if he can't describe the lady I'll eat my head. (LADY D. *looks hurriedly round the room to door L. 2 E., moves towards it, then with sudden resolution sweeps round to BILLY. LADY D. makes up her mind quickly, puts her arm round BILLY's waist and saying sweetly*)

LADY D. Come, dear! (*she turns with her and walks her up C. back of table to the back, by window R. C. JACK watches her keenly, an idea of the truth beginning to dawn on him. JACK moves up L. C. to back of table*)

MRS. G. (*fluttering with importance*) Now then! Order! (*puts bag down on floor*) Sir Harry, mind you take your notes of this conversation. Jack, look as like the church as you can to keep him off lies and perjury.

SIR H. (*half-rising*) But my dear Mrs. Greaves—

MRS. G. Oh, I'm past butting, Sir Harry. (HAGSON *enters* L. 2. E.) I'm going through with this. (*she pulls at her lace and gets herself ready for the fray, then says with icy grandeur*) Good evening, Mr. Hagson!

HAG. (L. C.—*who is a very respectable looking manservant, but obviously very nervous and ill at ease*) Good evening, ma'am.

MRS. G. (*aside to JACK who is back of table*) Jack, apologise for me, I said good-evening to the prisoner, I mean the witness. But there, he looks the sort of man who should be both. (JACK *goes down to sofa and sits. Then she adopts the tone of a brow-beating cross-examiner*) Now then, Mr. Hagson—(HAGSON *moves towards her, BUTLER exits, closing door*) I know all about you from your sister-in-law, who was Lady Roop's housekeeper. Don't twiddle your hat, stand on both legs, and control yourself. Where were you in 1901.

HAG. Beg pardon, ma'am!

MRS. G. Don't hedge—I know! You valeted Mr. James Greaves while he occupied a flat three doors off an Aerated Bread shop in Victoria Street.

HAG. (*after a pause*) Yes'm.

MRS. That flat was also occupied by a—

HAG. (*quickly*) Oh no, mum!

MRS. G. (*pointing to JACK. HAGSON turns and looks at JACK*) This gentleman's going into the church. Don't lie or perjure. Keep your eye on him, and think you've kissed the book. Now (HAG. *turns back towards JANE*) for what sum of money do you think you could remember this lady's name?

HAG. (*getting very perplexed*) Well—mum—

MRS. G. Do you think you could do it for ten pounds?

HAG. No, mum.

MRS. G. Twenty pounds?

HAG. No, mum!

MRS. G. Fifty pounds?

HAG. (*passes his hand across his forehead in great distress*) Well, mum—

MRS. G. Well, sir—

HAG. (*with a gulp*) Don't seem as if I could call to mind the name, mum.

MRS. G. Could you describe her for fifty pounds?

HAG. (*rather quickly, much perplexed*) Well, as to describing—

MRS. G. Do it! The money's yours. (*A pause—LADY*

D. and **BILLY** still at back in alcove. Before he can speak, **LADY D.** turns swiftly from alcove, and walks boldly down **C.** still with her arm round **BILLY** and looking **HAG.** straight in the eye says)

LADY D. But, dear Mrs. Greaves, if the man knows the lady and went to her, it might be worth much more to him to hold his tongue. (both **JACK** and **SIR H.** are watching **LADY D.** with great intentness)

MRS. G. That's the worst of females, they will chip in. Here's your fifty pounds. What was she like? (**LADY D.** and **BILLY** both stare at **HAG.** **BILLY** because she doesn't know what it's all about, **LADY D.** because she daren't lose his eye)

HAG. (with a sudden burst) I couldn't rightly say, them sort is mostly fair or dark or different—they varies. I don't remember.

MRS. G. (rising and leaning across table) I'll give you a hundred for her name.

HAG. (after a long pause) I forget it.

MRS. G. For her description!

HAG. (looking at **LADY D.**) No good. I shouldn't know her if I saw her right before my eyes. (**SIR H.** rises, **MRS. G.** sinks back in chair)

LADY D. (with a sigh of relief, which she turns into a light laugh) I think your husband may congratulate himself on his late valet (a pause. **LADY D.** and **BILLY** up stage **C.**)

SIR H. Shall I ring, Mrs. Greaves?

MRS. G. (flinging herself back in the chair) Ring—ring! Yes. Wring his neck—and—send him to the kitchen for some soup. (**JACK** rises and moves up, making motions to **HAG.** to go. **HAG.** at door **L.** bows all round)

HAG. Good evening, gentlemen. Good evening, ladies. Good evening, mum.

MRS. G. (fiercely) Rats, man, rats! I'll send you the cheque for coming in the morning. (exit **HAG.** solemnly **L. 2. E.**)

LADY D. (up **R. C.** very soothingly) Oh, Jane, you see, what use is it trying to find out? It's past. Let it remain past. Don't you think so, Miss Marr?

BILLY. (R. of **LADY D.**) I haven't an idea what you're all talking about. (she goes up **C.**)

LADY D. (with a lift of her eyebrows) Oh, I thought you'd guess. (up **C.** and to window **L. C.** **JACK** moves down **L.** to sofa, back to audience)

MRS. G. (**JACK** down **L. H.** again) Refuses a hundred! Is the man made of money? I—I'll give him a day to sleep on it, and I'll offer him five hundred pounds, but the truth I'll have if it costs me a thousand. (she puts letters, etc., back in bag) He'll be sorry he refused a hundred

in the morning, and he'll write me a letter making an offer. I'll wait. No good throwing good money after a bad husband, is it? (*rising*) Mr. Lawyer, barrister, Sir Harry? Well, there—you want five pounds, my dear, to turn to more pleasant things. (*Mrs. G. crosses to L. of table—LADY D. comes down slowly*)

BILLY. (*to R. of table*) It's awfully good of you, Mrs. Greaves. (*JANE takes bank-note from portemonnaie and gives BILLY one during the following. BILLY goes down R. Mrs. G. sits L. of table and takes out letters again*)

LADY D. (*who has gradually become conscious of JACK'S keen scrutiny of her—goes to him, whispers inquiringly*) I was right, Jack, wasn't I? It was no good allowing the wretch to speak.

JACK. (*down L. H. looking at her steadily*) I'm not quite so sure of that. (*then under his breath—sternly*) You knew Mr. Hagson—where have you met before? (*she looks at him for an instant, then laughs a little*)

LADY D. You're a very odd young fellow, Mr. Frere. (*she turns from him up L. C.—he watches her for a moment, then goes to BILLY, holding out his hand*)

JACK. (*crosses to C. front of table*) You're not angry with me still, are you, Billy?

BILLY. (*R. C. drawing herself up—haughtily*) Only my friends call me Billy, Mr. Frere.

JACK. (*C.—softly*) How tired you must be of hearing the name. (*she turns her back on him with a disdainful sniff—to R. Sits in lower arm-chair: SIR H. tries to pacify her*)

MRS. G. (*seated L. of table. Who had been regaling herself with bits of the various letters that are on the table—suddenly snorts*) Here, Jack, you've been very good at explaining these letters away.—What do you make of this?

JACK. (*C. turns on her almost fiercely*) For heaven's sake don't read it now.

MRS. G. (*astonished*) Why not?

JACK. (*across table*) I—I have a reason.

MRS. G. What reason?

JACK. (*quickly trying to restrain her—and casting an anxious look at BILLY*) I'll tell you afterwards. (*sits R. of table*)

MRS. G. Pooh! Mark the artfulness of the beginning. No "sweets or darlings"—oh no—this isn't an ordinary love letter. Listen! (*Mrs. G. exclaims dramatically letter in hand*) "Oh my Toodles—"

BILLY. (*starting up from chair*) What?

JACK. (*rising—checking her*) Be quiet.

BILLY. (*R. C.*) Mr. Frere! (*reseats herself. JACK goes up R. C.*)

MRS. G. (*seated L. of table, looking round at them in surprise*) What's up?

LADY D. (*down L. of JANE—soothingly*) Please read no more, it only depresses you.

MRS. G. (*shortly*) Don't keep chipping in. I like being depressed—It's the only comfort I've got. (BILLY *aghast and bewildered in arm-chair R.*)

LADY D. (*L. to MRS. G., gently expostulating*) But Miss Mart—(JACK comes down a little. LADY D. goes up L.)

MRS. G. (*L. C. looks round at BILLY, who is still quite lost in amazement*) Quite right—she's too young. (*she glares at letter*) Toodles indeed. Ha! and the last line "I like you ever—ever—ever so without your moustache." (*she repeats scornfully*) Ever—ever—ever so—Brazen face! "We shall meet in the old spot to-morrow, Toodles dear, it seems years off to your impatient but loving Wang." (SIR H. and JACK go up. BILLY who has been listening in amazement to the letter, rises and crosses to R. of table in great excitement, and says chokingly)

BILLY. Mrs. Greaves—that letter—

MRS. G. (*looking at her in great surprise*) Yes, my dear, don't tell me you know any one of the name of Wang.

JACK. (*quickly interposing, down C. At back of table*) No, she doesn't, of course she doesn't. (*then fiercely*) Why do you want to drag everybody into this miserable business.

MRS. G. (*rises—rounding on him*) Miserable business—Jack—(LADY D. crosses to C. at back).

BILLY. (*R. C. pointing at letters with a hand that shakes—says chokingly*) You found those letters—

MRS. G. (*L. C. interrupting*) I found these letters with in my husband's desk. (*a pause—BILLY turns and look at JACK, who is above table*)

BILLY. (*C. speaking very slowly*) And Mr. Frere has read them—

JACK. (*R. C. quickly*) Billy, for heaven's sake—

BILLY. (*coldly*) Don't call me Billy, please!

LADY D. (*up R. C.*) Oh, don't say you dear people have quarrelled—

MRS. G. (*looking from BILLY to JACK in amazement*) Quarrelled—already?

JACK. (*despairingly*) No, we've not.

BILLY. (*stamps*) Yes, we have! (*then she resumes her dignified air*) That is to say we have realized that our engagement was a mistake, that's all. (MRS. G. gathers up letters from table and moves down to sofa L., reticule on sofa)

LADY D. (*sympathetically*) Oh, don't say that. (*goes up*)

JACK. (*crossing to L. then below table to BILLY*) We haven't realised any such thing. Billy, how can you?

BILLY. (*glaring at JACK furiously*) Don't call me Billy,

please. (*becomes suddenly very calm, crosses in front of table L. C.*) Mrs. Greaves, you want to know who wrote those letters signed Wang! (*LADY D. comes down slowly*)

JACK. (*R. C.*) No, she doesn't.

MRS. G. (*at sofa L.*) Yes, I do. I'd sell my eye-teeth for the information.

LADY D. (*down R. of BILLY, putting her arm in BILLY'S quickly*) Come away, dear, you don't know what you're doing.

BILLY. (*shaking herself clear of LADY D., who turns up C. BILLY over to L. C. turns up her nose to JACK as she passes him*) Leave me alone. I do know what I'm doing, thank you, Lady Duncan. (*down to L. C.*) Mrs. Greaves, I wrote that letter to Mr. Greaves, and about the time I wrote that I wrote many more. I hope you have given Mr. Frere every opportunity of discussing all of them with you.

JACK. (*C.*) Billy, Billy—how could I help it?

BILLY. (*L. C. with great sarcasm*) I quite see what a temptation it must have been. (*to SIR H.*) "Better find these things out too soon than too late." (*HARRY sneaks up to fireplace*)

JACK. (*is beginning to get quite desperate*) Oh, my dear, my dear, do let me put this straight. (*BILLY again turns her back on him*)

MRS. G. (*seated on sofa—she had been completely dumfounded by BILLY'S confession—pulls herself together sufficiently to gasp breathlessly*) You wrote these letters?

BILLY. Yes. (*crosses to R. C. HARRY comes forward to explain. She turns her back on him, and goes up a little, LADY D. crosses back of table to L. and down to sofa*)

LADY D. (*endeavouring to calm Mrs. G.*) Oh Jane, I think—

MRS. G. (*with a snort of fury*) Think! I'll think—when I swallow this. She wrote these letters! (*rises and goes to L. of table, has several letters with her*)

JACK. (*R. off table, quite desperate—bangs on the table*) Once for all let's put this matter straight.

MRS. G. (*L. of table, shrilly*) Put this straight? If there's any putting things straightener.

LADY D. (*L. of JANE*) Much kinder to hush it up. Oh do, for my sake, Jane.

MRS. G. (*going to sofa, sits and picks up letters*) I will not hush it up for your sake or anybody else's. (*she goes to sofa, BILLY standing haughtily R. of the room, her hands clenched, glaring at JACK*) You wrote 'em! This—this and this—you wrote 'em! Billy Marr, I know your mother, don't look me in the face and tell me that you're Wang.

BILLY. (*haughtily*) I was Wang. (*MRS. G. collapses on sofa*)

JACK. (C.—to BILLY—*hotly*) I won't allow—

BILLY. (R. C. *interrupting fiercely*) And what's more I'm not ashamed to own it, Mrs. Greaves. (*then with bitter scorn*) If you will have copies made of all those letters, Mr. Frere would doubtless get up a debate about them at his club.

JACK. Billy, if you go on like this, you'll make me angry.

BILLY. (*calmly*) Oh indeed!

JACK. (C.) Be quiet! Sit down and listen to reason.

MRS. G. She'll have to sit up and listen to my lawyer.

LADY D. (L. of JANE) Oh, Jane—be gentle.

MRS. G. (*angrily shaking her off*) Don't keep chipping in!

LADY D. The dear child can explain it all.

MRS. G. She shall explain it all—and it'll take her all her time. (LADY D. *goes up to window L. and looks out*)

JACK. (*turning to MRS. G. below table*) She shall do nothing of the sort.

BILLY. (*turning fiercely on JACK*) She will do as she pleases, and she begs that you'll not interfere.

MRS. G. (*waving another letter, which she picks up from those on sofa, laughs hysterically*) Ha—ha—! poetry upon my word. "When I look from my window I see your face, your eyes reflected from the sky. Don't you wish we were birds, Toodles?" (JACK *who is below table takes letter from her and tears it up and throws pieces on stage, goes up C. a little*)

MRS. G. (L.) You wrote that rubbish?

BILLY. (R.—*defiantly*) I did—but it didn't seem rubbish then.

JACK. (*moving to C.*) It wasn't rubbish then, you thought you loved him. Billy, I understand.

MRS. G. Jack! Jack! get out of the way. How can I see through you. (*he goes up C.* MRS. G. *risks and comes to L. C.*) Perhaps Miss Marr will tell me whether she knows anything of a flat at 188 third floor Victoria Street.

JACK. (*coming down L. C., furiously turning to JANE*) Mrs. Greaves, how dare you?

BILLY. (*starting forward a little to R. C.*) What do you mean by that?

MRS. G. (L. C.) Wasn't my question clear? But there, I quite understand, you never were near such a place. Quite right not to incriminate yourself. (*goes back to sofa.* JACK *crosses at back to R. and meets SIR H., they confer for a moment*)

BILLY. (R. C., *looking round haughtily at all of them*) I was near such a place, as it happens. I lived there for some time.

MRS. G. (*sits on sofa L.*) That's right. Beautiful can dour!

LADY D. (*down to above table—to BILLY*) Oh my dear—do, do explain—tell them—Oh, say—that—that you—Oh—that your mother was with you all the time—or—

BILLY. (R. C.) What are you talking about? My mother *was* with me all the time.

LADY D. (*with a smile*) There! I knew she was. There, Jane, see how unkind you are. Her mother was with her all the time.

MRS. G. (*rises*) Very clever—very smart of you, Lady Duncan. Perhaps you'll stop chipping in with people's mothers. I dare say Miss Marr can trot out her own relations without help from you. But her mother won't wash, my dear. I can see through a brick wall as far as most people, and Miss Wilhelmina Marr's mother on this occasion will not wash. (*LADY D. goes up*)

BILLY. (*crosses to table R. C., R. of it*) I can't see what all the fuss is about. If I was foolish enough to write silly letters to my cousin, it is my affair and his affair, and there's an end of the matter.

MRS. G. (*rises*) You dare to say that to me? Oh, to think that I should live to call you hussy! (*JACK leaves SIR H. and goes down R.*)

BILLY. (*haughtily*) Mrs. Greaves!

MRS. G. Don't "Mrs. Greaves" me. The sooner you catch the ten o'clock train the better pleased I'll be. I—I—Lord forgive me, for turning your mother's daughter out of doors. (*sits on sofa. BILLY crosses R., then goes up, crosses L. at back of stage then crosses R. then comes down*)

JACK. (*coming L. C. below table*) Mrs. Greaves, I will not tolerate such an iniquitous proceeding. For Heaven's sake think of what people will say. (*to BILLY*) Billy, for the love of heaven, don't let your perfectly natural anger drive you into such a false position. Give us the facts, explain this silly business. Mrs. Greaves is groping absurdly in the dark. Explain it, and she'll gladly apologize to you.

MRS. G. (*leaning back on sofa with a snort*) Apologise! I! That's likely!

BILLY. (R. of table—*picking up "Globe"—reads bitterly*) "Get her to explain once and for all and have done with it." (*then she crushes up paper fiercely and throws it at his feet*) Suppose I don't choose to explain.

JACK. (*bursting out*) Don't be so pig-headed. (*she turns up stage and crosses to L. of table back of it—and then crosses R. and sits up R. till end of speech. He checks himself*) I beg pardon, but, oh, Billy, think—look at the impression you're conveying not to me, but to these ladies. (*MRS. GREAVES gives another short snort of derision.*)

JACK turns on her angrily—he is still below table) **Mrs. Greaves**, will you, for heaven's sake, be patient, and go into this matter quietly. Don't you see that the idea of Miss **Marr** ever looking at such a man as your husband is ridiculous. (**SIR H.** over against mantel—face down—trying to hide his laughter)

MRS. G. (*rising*) What!

JACK. I don't mean that, I mean Miss **Marr** has promised to be my wife.

MRS. G. That was before these revelations—now like a wise man you've broken it off. (**BILLY** sits up)

JACK. (*angrily*) I've not broken it off—I—

MRS. G. Be thankful I've opened your eyes. (*sits sofa*)

JACK. Opened my eyes! How dare you! (*he becomes speechless*)

BILLY. (*rises and down R. C. coldly*) If you'll kindly order a carriage I will leave your house at once.

JACK. (*C.*) Where to go?

BILLY. I shall go to Paris to-night. (*SIR HARRY comes down R.*)

LADY D. (*above table to BILLY as if expostulating*) My dear, Mr. **Greaves** goes to Paris to-night. (*looks at her amazed*)

MRS. G. (*rises*) What? There's your young woman of to-day! Borrows a fiver from the deluded wife to pay her fare to Paris with the husband. (*sinks back on the sofa*)

BILLY. (*stamping—crossing to JANE*) How dare you say such a thing! Oh, how dare you? (*she tears up note furiously and flings it at MRS. G.'s feet*) There's the money, you wicked, wicked woman.

MRS. G. (*amazed*) My money, look at it! Oh how I could express myself if only my breathing weren't so short! (**JACK** goes up *C.* and down *L. C.* **SIR H.** goes up *R.* and down again. **LADY D.** goes down *L.* and up again)

BILLY. I won't touch a penny of it. (*crosses R.*) I'll walk to the station and telegraph to mother to send me sufficient to take me away from here. (*turns to C. Action, all characters except JANE move to and fro and finish in the same situation*)

JACK. (*as they stop walking, faces BILLY C.—firmly*) You don't leave this house until the truth is known, and **Mrs. Greaves** and others (*he looks pointedly at LADY D. who is at chair L. of table*) have apologised.

MRS. G. It's my house, Mr. **Frere**, and she leaves it as soon as possible.

BILLY. She leaves it now. I'm going to the station to telegraph now.

JACK. (*quietly*) You can't do that. You say you have no money.

BILLY. (*with great dignity*) I dare say I can borrow half-a-crown.

MRS. G. (*on sofa L. shutting up her reticule, quickly*) After the way you've behaved to my fiver—once bit twice shy. (*picks up reticule as if to guard it*)

JACK. And it's no good looking at me. Not a farthing do you get. It's my duty to see that you don't leave this house until they've all apologised.

BILLY. (R. C. *turning quickly to SIR H. R.*) Sir Harry, you'll lend me two shillings? (*SIR H. feels for the money*)

JACK. (*down C.*) At your peril, Harry. She's my future wife and I'm going to manage this affair.

BILLY. (R. C. *turning on him with scorn*). Your future wife! I tell you, Mr. Frere, if there wasn't another man in the world I wouldn't marry you now.

JACK. And I tell you, Miss Marr, if there wasn't another woman in the world I'd marry you whether you liked it or not. (*BILLY walks to R*)

MRS. G. (*on sofa—staring blankly at JACK*) The man's mad.

JACK. (*over to MRS. G.*) Not a bit of it! Mad—not I! (*back again to L. C. BILLY makes a quick movement to door—he intercepts her*) Stay where you are till I clear this up. You've no money so it's no use worrying.

BILLY. (*stamping her foot and hovering on the brink of tears*) I hate you. Oh, I hate you all! (*the BUTLER enters with coffee on a large silver salver L. 2 E. and BILLY crosses L. to him. He places tray on table up L.*)

BILLY. Ford, (*he turns to her*) lend me half-a-crown.

BUTLER. (*a little astonished*) Certainly, Miss. (*He fumbles for the coin in coin purse while she stands with her hand outstretched glaring defiance at JACK. FORD presents her gravely with the coin, which she snatches. Exit FORD L., shutting door*)

JACK. (*calmly—having made up his mind to accept the inevitable*) As it's so late you'll have to telegraph from the station.

BILLY. I shall telegraph from where I please.

JACK. (*moving down R.*) Of course you will. Try the coach house or the croquet lawn. (*BILLY sniffs back her tears and marches firmly to the door and with her nose well in the air. As she gets to it, she returns a step or two and says with great dignity to JANE*)

BILLY. Mrs. Greaves, I am not naturally given to telling stories but I've told you one to-night. I've had no letter from my mother, she is, I hope, quite well. I tell you this, because one only tells little lies to one's friends—other people wouldn't understand. (*she stalks out and slams the door L. 2 E.*)

JACK. She's going because she thinks I'm a cad. Oh, my gracious, how difficult it is to make women understand. (*crosses to chair R. of table—sits in it. SIR H. sits in arm-chair down R.*)

MRS. G. I understand perfectly. You're in love, Jack, your brain ain't working. (*LADY D. comes down*)

LADY D. (*above sofa*) But one must admire the way the dear child carries it off.

JACK. Carries it off! Why, God bless me, she hasn't the smallest notion of the preposterous and iniquitous things you are thinking about her, and I'll take jolly good care she never finds it out. (*picks up book and reads. MRS. G. is beginning to feel the effects of her recent excitement and shows symptoms of approaching tears*)

MRS. G. I'm an unhappy woman, Lady Duncan.

LADY D. That's all right, Jane.

MRS. G. Upon my word I wish I'd never tried to find out anything. Billy, Little Billy Marr; and I was so fond of her.

LADY D. Oh, don't give way, Jane. Let's bury this painful matter once for all.

MRS. G. (*rising with decision*) I will—upon my word I will. (*LADY D. moves up a little*)

JACK. (*closing up book sharply*) Upon my word you won't. We'll get this clear.

MRS. G. It is clear—she owned up—

JACK. Of course she did, but to what? She *did* once when little more than a school girl, think she was in love with Jim, she did write those silly letters, but as she very justly claims, they weren't silly then. She's right, they were very beautiful then. I confess I fail to see either wit or wisdom in signing herself "Wang."

MRS. G. (*quickly*) Oh, what good woman would do that? I should like to see the man who'd dare call me "Wang."

JACK. (*rounding on her at once*) And I shouldn't blush with pride at being christened "Toodles." Come, come, Mrs. Greaves, be sensible. It was a boy and girl affair, over—dead and done with ages before you married him, believe it—you must believe it.

MRS. G. But the flat—his flat. She owned she lived there.

JACK. I know she did. Tenants come and tenants go, Mrs. Greaves, and others take their place. No, no, leave this to me.

MRS. G. (*down to sofa—indicating letters—firmly*) Jim shared that flat with somebody. I have proof—heaps of proof. (*sits on sofa, picks up letters. LADY D. L. of table above chair L.*)

JACK. (*still seated at table looking for pen or pencil*) I

know you have. Heaps and heaps of proof. Jim shared that flat with someone, and I'm going to find out who that someone was. Lend me your pencil, Lady Duncan.

LADY D. (*with an air of innocent inquiry*) You think you know something, Mr. Frere?

JACK. I shouldn't be surprised if I do, Lady Duncan.

LADY D. What are you going to do?

JACK. There's one man in this world who does know who this woman is, and he's got to pass that knowledge on to me.

LADY D. (*smiling*) He won't.

JACK. He will. I'm fighting for the girl I'm going to marry, so I don't mean to stick at trifles. Lend me your pencil.

LADY D. (*with a smile*) What man is this?

JACK. You'll see. He's coming. Your pencil please.

LADY D. What for? (*she has unhooked it from her bracelet and gives it to him*)

JACK. (*sitting down to write R. of table*) I'm going to send a telegram to Jim.

OMNES. (*rise, they all gasp out in astonishment*) To Jim!

JACK. (*looking round at them all blandly*) Well, he's bound to know the lady, isn't he!

QUICK CURTAIN.

END OF ACT 2.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The oak hall. Big stained-glass windows C. Big fireplace left. Stairs R. C., leading to gallery. Large double oak doors, both wide open C., showing the steps on to the terrace and the garden beyond.*

DISCOVERED.—JACK FRERE *in boots and gaiters. comes quickly in door L. 1 E. as FIELDING, MISS MARR'S maid comes down steps R.*

JACK. (L. C.) Ah! there you are—what's Miss Marr doing now?

MAID. (R. C.) Still trying to write that letter, sir.

JACK. (*delighted*) Is she really? How many does that make?

MAID. It's the seventh I've seen her begin, nearly finish and tear up.

JACK. Have all her boxes been sent to the wrong station?

MAID. (*nodding very gravely*) All of 'em, sir.

JACK. (*rubbing his hands and chuckling*) And that's a five-mile drive—splendid. Then with any luck she's bound to miss the train.

MAID. (*R. C. demurely*) Bound to miss *all* the morning trains, sir. It'll be quite half-an-hour before I find out I'm at the wrong station, and I shall have her ticket and all her money, sir.

JACK. (*C. quickly to himself*) Where did she get the money?

MAID. I had some by me, sir.

JACK. You're a good girl, but that was foolish. (*he gives her a sovereign*)

MAID. (*curtsey*) Thank you, sir. I'd better start, sir. (*moves up C.*)

JACK. Yes—start away. (*the MAID goes off C. to L. Standing by newel post--rubbing his hands*) She's writing all those letters to me—bless her. (*BUTLER crosses hall from L. 2 E. into breakfast room R. 2 E. As the door is open bursts of laughter. At newel post. To BUTLER*) Who's breakfasting?

BUTLER. Lady Duncan and some of the gentlemen, sir. (*stopping about R. C. he goes into breakfast room after SIR H. has come out. SIR H. comes out laughing heartily. JACK is perpetually glancing up to the gallery, round the hall expecting BILLY's arrival*)

SIR H. (*R.*) Hullo!

JACK. (*up L. C. turning to him*) Hullo! (*coming down to front of table L. C.*)

SIR H. (*coming to C. R. of table*) There's no mistake about it, she can be devilish amusing when she tries. She's just told—(*he stops*) Oh, I forgot, you don't see the point of amusing stories just now, do you?

JACK. (*L. C.*) Oh, yes, I do—if they are amusing.

SIR H. (*C.*) What news?

JACK. Well, Jim ought to be here by now—so ought that fellow Hagson.

SIR H. And Miss Marr? (*gravely*)

JACK. (*looking at his watch*) She leaves in about five minutes, but she'll miss the train, for I've had her traps sent, as if by accident, to the wrong station—there's no other train for two hours, so she'll either have to wait at the station or come back here—it doesn't matter which—she'll be getable any way.

SIR H. Oh, that's your news—you've not heard mine. She's hooked the millionaire.

JACK. (*looking up surprised*) Lady Duncan?

SIR H. Yes. She was in the devil's own hurry evidently—all happened after our little scene last night. She is smart, you know, and he announced the engagement to us

all this morning at breakfast, and 'pon my soul, my lady blushed like a two-year-old.

JACK. Then she must have been thinking of something else. (*SERVANT enters from L. at back to platform C.*)

SERV. There's a person of the name of Hagson wishes to see you, sir by appointment.

JACK. Quite right—bring him in. (*exit SERVANT. Planting himself firmly with his back to the fire L. H., and his legs apart*) Now the fun begins.

SIR H. (*R. of table*) I don't expect you'll get much out of Hagson.

JACK. I'll get what I want. I'll get a complete corroboration of my present suspicion that it was my Lady Duncan who was Master Jim's *chere amie* in that flat. I'm going to spoof the gentle Hagson into giving the game away and if my suspicions prove correct I'll give that lady occasion to sit up and snort.

SIR H. (*R. of table*) Suppose Hagson proves too much for you. (*lighting a cigar*)

JACK. He won't. I led him to believe in my letter that I was sending for him on behalf of Lady Duncan.

SIR H. (*expostulating*) But, my dear chap—

JACK. (*quietly lighting a cigar*) It's playing things rather low down, I daresay, but I'd sooner be called a cad by all my friends than allow an innocent girl to suffer for a guilty woman. Lady Duncan thinks she has won the millionaire, does she? Very well, that's a card in my hand and caddish or not I'll play it for Billy's sake. (*turns up C. a little. SERVANT announces MR. HAGSON who enters C. from L. HARRY crosses L. and sits chair above door*)

JACK. (*standing with his back to fireplace*) Good morning, Mr. Hagson.

HAG. Good morning, sir.

JACK. Lady Duncan was very pleased with your behaviour last evening, and is most desirous that you should suffer no financial loss by reason of your discretion. By the way, this is Sir Harry Harmon, who knows all the circumstances.

HAG. (*turning his hat nervously and keeping his eyes on the ground*) Her ladyship is very kind—I—I think I didn't make myself quite clear. (*a rapid glance of comprehension passes between SIR HARRY and JACK*)

JACK. You behaved admirably—and her ladyship is grateful.

HAG. (*shifting uneasily from one foot to another*) Beggin' your pardon, sir—(*he breaks off at a loss*)

JACK. (*coming to table*) If you will let me know what sum you require I have instructions to fill in this cheque. (*sitting L. of table, takes cheque from pocket*)

HAG. There it is, sir—what with the old lady sendin' for

me—and all of a sudden askin' me who?—and her ladyship bein' there herself—I lost my 'ead, sir.

JACK. It wasn't apparent. No one would have guessed you and her ladyship had met before. (*then putting cheque on table, he takes up pen*) How much? (*pause*)

HAG. (*shaking his head*) Thank you, sir—it's very kind of her ladyship, but her ladyship don't understand. When I first married, foolish like, I told my wife a few of the things I'd seen in my time. She went a-talking to her sister (*smiles at the remembrance of what took place—cynically*) She ain't been a-talking since. My respects to her ladyship, but she and Mr. Jim might a knowed me better than to—to—

JACK. (*rising in great astonishment*) You mean you won't take the money?

HAG. No, thank you, sir. Both her ladyship and Mr. Jim can rely on me to hold my tongue without bein' paid for it.

JACK. Then as my only purpose in sending for you was to pay you for your discretion, I fear I've wasted your time.

HAG. Not at all, sir. I should have waited on her ladyship anyhow to tell her she and Mr. Jim could rely on me.

JACK. I'll tell her, Mr. Hagson, it's very kind of you.

HAG. It's a matter of principle with me, sir, and I never goes back on my principles.

SIR H. (L. H., *nudging JACK with his foot*) I wish we could all say that, eh, Jack?

JACK. (L. C. *dubiously*) Um! (*a pause*) Then that's all, I suppose, we can do.

HAG. Yes sir, thank you very much, sir. Good day, sir. (*goes up to platform c. and turns back*) I trust you'll explain to her ladyship and Mr. Jim.

JACK. I certainly will.

HAG. (*on platform c. doorway*) Thank you, sir. Good day, sir.

JACK and SIR H. Good day. (*exit HAGSON C. to R. JACK and SIR H. look at each other in complete astonishment*)

JACK. (*crossing to c. front of table*) We've begun the day well, we've actually met an honest man.

SIR H. (*has risen to L. C. below table*) No matter—we've found out what we wanted to know.

JACK. We have, thank God. Doesn't it make you shudder to think what that woman must be made of? By Gad! I know what I'm dealing with now. (*down R.*)

SIR H. (*up L. C.*) I suppose the next thing to do is to tackle the woman herself.

JACK. (*grimly*) And at once.

SIR H. Well, I wish you joy of that task. (*strolls on to*

terrace off C. to R. FOOTMAN enters from R. BUTLER from L. A trap drives up to door. BUTLER says a word to groom and is about to go up-stairs. The FOOTMAN exit after having spoken to BUTLER)

JACK. (at stairway R. C.) Is that trap to take Miss Marr to the station?

SERV. Yes, sir. (he goes up-stairs, meeting BILLY who enters through archway R. 3 upper platform and is dressed for departure) The trap's here, Miss.

BILLY. Thank you. (gives BUTLER cloak, who exits with it C. to R., servant goes out. BILLY sees JACK and paying no attention to him, comes down-stairs with great dignity. JACK looks at her quizzically then becomes apparently very serious. BILLY crosses to R. of table L. C.)

JACK. (coming down R.) I have been waiting here for a word or two before you go.

BILLY. (with a sniff—putting glove on left hand) Very inconsiderate of you.

JACK. (sentimentally regarding her) People in love are always inconsiderate, I'm told.

BILLY. (coldly) Are they? I've never been in love.

JACK. (C.) So I've heard. (a pause) So I suppose you and I won't see each other again—Oh, for a long, long time.

BILLY. I hope not.

JACK. Of course once you leave this house you'll never come back to it.

BILLY. (tries to put R. hand glove on L. hand, over L. hand one. Very firmly) Never!

JACK. (gravely) Ah!—(a pause) You wouldn't like me to explain my last night's attitude before you go?

BILLY. (coldly) It really wouldn't interest me.

JACK. (with a prolonged and melancholy sigh) No—I didn't suppose it would. (JACK coughs—BILLY discovers mistake of gloves) but—but, if you would condescend for one moment to put yourself in my place—

BILLY. I won't.

JACK. Perhaps you're right, it's not a comfortable place. I'm a poor simple-minded country mouse, you—(BILLY laughs) you've gathered that from my behaviour—

BILLY. (spasmodic laugh) Scarcely.

JACK. Oh, I'm sorry—I've always tried to convey it. And of course you must realize that all I heard yesterday was a great surprise to me. Of course a little explanation from either of us could have made everything quite easy but—explanation involves a little trouble and after all, with only two people's lives at stake it wasn't worth it, was it?

BILLY. (shortly) I don't think it was. Is the trap there?

JACK. Yes, your luggage has gone on, but of course it's very delightful to gratify one's temper at the expense of one's reputation, isn't it? (*BILLY goes up c. on to platform. Then with great anxiety*) I hope you're taking a rug?

BILLY. (*stops c., clenches her fists and comes right down to him, looking fiercely at him*) Mr. Frere, it may interest you to know I have never met a man, of whom, in so short a space of time, I formed two such different opinions.

JACK. (*up R. of BILLY*) Miss Marr, it may interest you to know I have never met a woman of whom, in so short a space of time, I formed one such definite opinion.

BILLY. (*scornfully*) Whatever opinion you formed apparently required a lot of smoke-room conversation to develop.

JACK. And a lot of drawing-room conversation was powerless to undevelop it. Is nobody going to the station with you?

BILLY. Out of this house? No, thank you.

JACK. I'd come, but of course—

BILLY. (*bitterly*) Thank you.

JACK. (*looking at watch*) If you don't go at once, you'll miss your train.

BILLY. (*very haughtily turns up stage on to platform*) Good-bye.

JACK. (R. C.) Somehow I don't think so. I've an extraordinary presentiment that you won't go far after all—you'll come back.

BILLY. (*calmly steps off platform c.*) Oh, will I?

JACK. But if you want to catch the train you must go at once.

BILLY. (*with a stamp*) Oh, if you only knew how I hated everybody! (*to doorway c. looks off*) Oh, there's Sir Harry, I want to speak to him.

JACK. (*going on to platform R. of BILLY*) Would you like me to go outside?

BILLY. (*almost in tears*) Yes. (*moves down R. SIR HARRY comes in c. from R.*)

JACK. (*to HARRY*) Harry, Harry, Miss Marr wants to speak to you. (*with great solemnity*) Alone. (*he goes out into garden c. to R.*)

SIR H. (*coming down quickly to c.*) Well, little woman?

BILLY. (R.—*with a little break in her voice*) Sir Harry, I—why are they all unkind to me?

SIR H. (C. *soothingly*) Are they?

BILLY. (*to him a little*) Yes,—awfully unkind. There was no harm in my writing those letters to Jim, we were engaged.

SIR H. (C.) Of course you were. By the way how did you happen to get hold of his flat in Victoria Street?

BILLY. (R. C.) Mother got it through the agents—

SIR H. Oh!

BILLY. Why?

SIR H. (*moving away to L. C.*) Nothing. It's a jolly neighbourhood. (*turning back to her.*) I wish you'd make it up with Jack. He loves the very ground you walk on.

BILLY. (*with a sob*) He doesn't.

SIR H. He does, and he never discussed you with me in the smoking room. He nearly punched my head because I whistled when I heard the story of those letters.

BILLY. (*angrily*) Why, why did you whistle?

SIR H. Because I saw how difficult it would be for him to convince a lot of fools that there were wise people in the world.

BILLY. (*with a little sob*) I—I'm not a wise person.

SIR H. Yes—you are.

BILLY. (*moves down R.*) No, I'm not. Oh, Oh, I—

SIR H. (*finishes her sentence for her*) You love him very dearly.

BILLY. (*hiding her face in her hands*) I know I do, it is not my fault. I can't help it—and—and I'm making him begin to think that I don't.

SIR H. (*grimly*) Poor old Jack! Now suppose when next you meet—suppose you just hold out your hand to him and say—Jack—I—(*he pauses at a loss how to go on, then cheerfully*) Well, you'll know what to say when the time comes.

BILLY. (*turning back to SIR H.—brightening up at the thought*) I will—I will. Yes, I'll tell him I've been bad tempered and beastly—an—an—

(JACK re-enters C. from R. and comes down C. L. of them.)

JACK. I'm sorry to interrupt, but you'll miss your train.

BILLY. (*curling up at once at his casual tone and turning to SIR H. desperately*) There, I told you—he doesn't care. (*to JACK*) Huh! (*turns to R.*)

JACK. (*coming down L. of SIR H.—to SIR H. aside*) What have I done?

SIR H. (*softly*) Been an ass. (*JACK turns away to L.*)

BILLY. (*coming to SIR H. quickly—aside*) Don't tell him—promise. (*turns away to R.*)

SIR H. Not a word. (*turns and looks at them, then up stage, coughs as he turns up. They turn simultaneously as if to speak to SIR H. and come face to face. She turns to go. JACK holds out his hand—she turns her head and stalks past him haughtily and off R.*)

JACK. (*going on to platform C.*) Oh, Harry, if you hadn't scribbled on the "Globe." See what tragedies trifles

breed. (*then he calls after BILLY*) Oh, Billy, if we'd only explained.

BILLY. (*calling back with a laugh*) Yes—better too soon than too late. (*the dog-cart disappears off R. on word*)

JACK. (*coming down R.*) She's glorious! I love every inch of her. Six minutes to the station—six minutes tearing hair over luggage. Six minutes to come back again and all will be serene. (*then to SIR HARRY who is up C. going up*) What did she tell you?

SIR H. (*they both come down a little R. C.*) Nothing I didn't know, but I swore not to repeat it. I'm learning lessons about repeating things. I wish you'd have allowed me to go with her to the station.

JACK. (*L. C.*) Couldn't—it would have spoiled my plans. (*they go up C. together.*) **HON. MRS. HERRING comes down-stairs meeting LADY ROOP on the landing from archway R. LADY ROOP from door L. 3 E. They meet on platform R. C. head of staircase. JACK and SIR H. start at the sound of their voices and listen)**

MRS. H. Mary—you've overslept yourself again.

LADY R. No, no. I was writing a little paragraph.

MRS. H. Not about Jane and Billy Marr?

LADY R. (*on platform—a little shamefacedly, then with a glimmering of defiance*) Yes, it's quite readable.

MRS. H. (*feebly*) But it isn't true; we know the facts.

SIR H. (*coming forward L. C.*) So do we— (*MRS. H. and LADY R. start down steps slowly*)

JACK. (*C. coming down with a smile and bowing courtesy to LADY ROOP*) And Lady Roop's paragraphs have earned the reputation for knowing something of the truth. I'm sure in this instance she won't jeopardize that justly earned monopoly. (*SIR H. comes down L. C.*)

LADY R. (*R. C. feebly*) I—I— (*then as an excuse—brightly*) Nobody ever believes what I write.

JACK. (*C. gravely*) Then why write?

LADY R. (*R. C.*) I—I get paid for it.

SIR H. (*L. C.*) Unanswerable.

MRS. H. (*R.*) I hear Jane ordered Billy Marr to go.

SIR H. (*L. C.*) Jane will go on her knees to her before an hour's out and beg her to remain.

MRS. H. Really? (*astonished*)

SIR H. (*L. C.*) On my word of honour.

JACK. (*C.*) Harry and I know the facts.

MRS. H. (*R.*) So does everybody—except Jane.

JACK. (*C.*) No, everybody doesn't—but everybody will.

LADY R. (*R. C.*) Oh, I'm so glad, I'm not going till tomorrow, it's all so interesting and such good copy.

JACK. (*looks at SIR H. over MRS. H.'s head*) Now then ladies, what facts do you know, and when did you learn

them? (MRS. H. looks at LADY R., LADY R. looks back helplessly at MRS. H. crosses below LADY R. to JACK)

MRS. H. (R. C., assuming an air of surprised virtue) Really, Mr. Frere—I cannot mix myself up in such matters.

LADY R. (R. adopting the same tone) Nor I.

MRS. H. (R. C.) I—I always make it a point to know nothing.

LADY R. (R.) And I.

MRS. H. (crossing R. below LADY R.) Mary—we're late for breakfast.

LADY R. (R. C.) I—dozed a little late this morning. (laugh is heard off R. 2 E.)

JACK. (turning up with HARRY) Let's get a breath of fresh air. I'm sick of the whole crew. (they go out into porch and off R. when LADY D. and others are on they pass at back and overhear them. LADY DUNCAN and MR. MUNKITTRICK, RADDLES and CAPTAIN BECHER come out of breakfast room, meeting MRS. HERRING and LADY ROOP)

LADY D. We've just been watching the departure of that poor Miss Marr.

MRS. H. She's really gone then?

LADY D. (crossing to C. followed by MUNK. to C. RAD. goes above table—BECHER goes to fireplace) Oh, dear yes, isn't it terrible?

LADY R. Terrible. (then to MRS. H. as they go off R. 2 E.) My dear, the eggs will be cold. (MRS. H. and LADY R. disappear into breakfast room R. 2 E.)

MUNK. (C. to LADY D.) If I hadn't heard it from you, my dear, I'd never have believed it.

BECHER. (by fireplace) I can't believe it now.

RAD. (back of table) The view I take of the matter—

LADY D. My dear people, I was far more astonished than any of you. I'd got quite fond of the dear child. Did you notice how red her eyes were? Oh dear, oh dear, one really does not know who to believe in nowadays.

BECHER. (by fireplace, looking curiously at LADY D.) That's true.

LADY D. (seated R. of table) I'm beginning to be a little sorry I told you this sad story. But I did it for the poor child's sake. If I hadn't told you, you'd have been all here seeing her off to the station, and asking her why she was going and all that, and it would have been so awkward for the poor girl to explain that she was going because her injured hostess, turned her out.

BECHER. It is the most incomprehensible thing I ever heard.

MUNK. Poor old Frere, it's awfully hard on him. (JACK and SIR H. enter C. from R. and stand on platform)

LADY D. Shocking—poor Jack's heart-broken.

BECHER. He's broken off the engagement, you say.

LADY D. Poor fellow, what else could he possibly do?

BECHER. (*moving down L. a little*) Then if he's done that it must be true.

JACK. (*coming down quietly to c.*) He has not done that—and it isn't true. (*SIR H. goes down R. They all turn quickly to him with exclamations of surprise*)

BECHER. (*to JACK—excitedly*) But Lady Duncan—

JACK. (*C. smiling at LADY D.*) Lady Duncan has been misinformed.

LADY D. (*leaning back in her chair, and looking up at him sweetly*) Oh, I do hope you're right.

MUNK. (*L. C.—bubbling over with excited curiosity*) Wasn't there any flat at all?

JACK. Oh, yes, there was a flat.

MUNK. And a lady?

JACK. And a lady.

LADY D. How interesting!

MUNK. Who was it?

JACK. (*mysteriously*) Ah!

BECHER. (*eagerly*) Do you know who it was?

JACK. Yes. (*they all betray great interest*)

LADY D. Oh, do tell us.

JACK. Sir Harry and I have, fortunately for Miss Marr, found out the facts.

LADY D. (*apparently profoundly impressed*) How interesting!

MUNK. (*leaning forward*) Who was the girl?

JACK. I can hardly tell you that—who knows you might all be on friendly terms with her. You see, I had to get to the bottom of this business because poor Mrs. Greaves was most absurdly visiting all her wrath upon Miss Marr. (*a look between JACK and SIR H.*)

LADY D. (*with a little laugh*) But, if it isn't Miss Marr, who is it? Do tell us—I'm dying with curiosity to know what dreadful revenge our dear Jane will take on her.

JACK. (*very slowly so that LADY D. may not miss his meaning*) Well, do you know—neither Sir Harry nor myself think it wise to let even Mrs. Greaves know who the other lady is. Of course if she won't believe us when we assure her that Miss Marr was not concerned in the affair, well, we shall be compelled to give her proof.

MUNK. (*L. C.*) What sort of proof?

JACK. (*C.*) The written confession of the fair culprit herself.

BECHER. (*down L. with a gasp of surprise*) You don't mean to say you have got that?

JACK. Not yet.

LADY D. (*looking at him with a smile*) Won't it be difficult to obtain?

JACK. I don't think so—do you, Harry? (*going to him a little*)

SIR H. (R.) Not a bit—but I trust we shan't require it. (MUNK. and RAD. go up C.)

BECHER. (*crossing, going to JACK, C., holding out his hand*) Frere—I—I—can't tell you how damned glad I am about this. I give you my word of honour—I could not bring myself to believe it.

JACK. (R. C. *shaking hands with him*) My dear chap, nobody with eyes in their head could have believed it. (BECHER up C. joins RADDLES and MUNKITTRICK up C. and they converse a moment)

LADY D. Oh, Mr. Frere, it's a terrible confession to make, but—but I believed a little after reading those letters, I could not help myself.

JACK. (*smiling at her*) No, no, Lady Duncan, I'm sure that in your heart of hearts you didn't—did you now?

LADY D. Well, perhaps I didn't—in my heart of hearts, but that's a part of my being to which I very seldom refer.

JACK. I can quite understand that. (BECHER has gone on to platform C., he and RADDLES stand for a moment lighting cigarettes, then disappear into the garden off C. to L. MUNK. drops down to L. of table)

LADY D. But surely, if all this misunderstanding has been cleared up, why the sudden departure of Miss Marr?

JACK. (C.) It is not publicly cleared up yet but it will be in the course of the next hour. Miss Marr has not gone, she will be back in about ten minutes. (LADY D. sits up surprised)

MUNK. Then it's not true that your engagement is broken off?

JACK. (*a little embarrassed*) Er—well—I had the misfortune to offend Miss Marr—but I think I may safely say that we shall be married by special license within a fortnight.

MUNK. (*holding his hands complacently across his stomach*) I am delighted to hear it. Pity we can't have the two weddings together—yours and mine. (*sitting L. of table*)

JACK. (*with a sudden outbreak of geniality*) My dear Munkittrick, forgive me, I never congratulated you.

MUNK. I am a lucky fellow, aren't I?

LADY D. (R. of table, *breaking in with a triumphant little laugh, holding up her hands*) Look, Mr. Frere, did ever you see such a diamond.

JACK. (*crossing to her and examining the outstretched hand and ring*) Beautiful.

LADY D. (*looking at him with half concealed defiance*) All mine—my very own.

JACK. (*returning her glance with meaning*) The engagement ring—wouldn't it go to your heart if ever you had to return it?

MUNK. (*sitting up*) What do you mean?

JACK. (*with a laugh*) I was thinking of my own case. (*he takes his ring from his pocket*) Look. Mine has come back to me once already.

MUNK. (*laughs*) Oh—a lovers' tiff, might happen to any of us.

SIR H. (*to MUNKITTRICK*) I wonder will it ever happen to you? (*LADY D. extends her hand across table, MUNK. fondles it*)

JACK. They say it takes two to quarrel, so we may rely on Lady Duncan's good sense to steer clear of one.

LADY D. Absolutely. (*clock strikes eleven. JACK goes to newel post L. of steps and leans on it*)

MUNK. (*rising*) As late as that? Val, my dear, if you can spare me for half an hour I would like to go to the library and read my letters.

LADY D. Half an hour! Oh Fred dear, what a time!

MUNK. I'll hurry.

LADY D. Oh don't; please, dawdle dear, and I'll occupy myself by flirting desperately with Sir Harry.

SIR H. Believe me, I'm not worth flirting with so soon after breakfast.

MUNK. You rogue! (*he playfully pinches her cheek across the table and makes her very angry*)

LADY D. (*shortly*) Fred, never do that again.

MUNK. (*with a boisterous laugh, going towards L. 2 E.*) Why, my dear, if it don't come off?

LADY D. Write your letters. No, it doesn't come off. (*exit MUNK. door L. 2 E.*)

JACK. (*quietly*) As a matter of fact it has. (*LADY D. hurt and angry, glances at him and rising goes to fireplace L. and carefully readjusts her complexion by pocket mirror*) Harry, would you like to remain, I'm going to have a little chat with Lady Duncan. (*she turns quickly and faces the two men*)

SIR H. (*moves up C. to L.*) Well, I don't think my presence is essential, but if Lady Duncan wishes any confirmation of your statements I shall be smoking a cigar out on the terrace. (*he goes out C. to L. A pause*)

JACK. (*by newel post*) Sir Harry and I have just had an interview with Hagson.

LADY D. Really.

JACK. We learnt from him all we desired to know.

LADY D. How fortunate for you.

JACK. In justice to Hagson I may tell you that no amount of money would have induced him to betray you. I obtained the information I required by a trick. Mr.

Hagson is one of the few gentlemen I have had the pleasure of meeting lately.

LADY D. (*comes to L. of table and picks up newspaper, casually*) Indeed. You mean the person who called last night—he seemed an honest sort of creature. (*turns paper. She has taken up a morning paper and is reading it. Pause*)

JACK. (*crosses to above table. Very quietly*) It's no good, Lady Duncan. I am going through with this affair. (*a pause*) It will be a great pity if you have to return that diamond ring.

LADY D. (*sits and reads paper*) I have no intention of doing so, my good man.

JACK. Fortunately that is a matter over which you have no control (*comes down R. of table*) Believe me, I have no intention of being unjust or hard to you in this matter, but I have made up my mind that unless you do what I wish, you shall bear the burden of your own pleasures yourself.

LADY D. (*rising. With admiration*) At last I can picture you in the pulpit, Mr. Frere.

JACK. (*paying no attention to the remark continues quietly*) You will sit down now and write out a short statement of the facts and I will give you my word, that provided Mrs. Greaves accepts my assurance, backed by Sir Harry's, of Miss Marr's innocence—nobody shall know of the existence of your confession, bar myself. But should it be impossible to convince Mrs. Greaves without making use of it, I will get a promise from her that she will never let the name pass her lips, and on that condition show her your confession.

LADY D. (*putting her hands to her temples affectedly*) My dear man, you talk so much you positively bewilder me.

JACK. I am not going to confine myself to talk; if I do not get that confession from you within half an hour, I go to Mr. Munkittrick and tell him what I know—it will then be to his interest to make inquiries. (*goes up C.*) Half an hour, Lady Duncan—it's a beautiful diamond and Munkittrick is worth, I'm told, over two hundred and fifty thousand.

LADY D. (*getting a little angry*) My dear Mr. Frere, if you definitely decide not to go into the church—for which I honestly think you are admirably fitted, take a friend's advice, go into a lunatic asylum. (*crossing to staircase R.*)

JACK. (*moves to above table*) There's pen and ink on this table when you require it.

LADY D. (*by newel post, laughing and holding up her ring hand*) See it! See it! Watch how it glitters. There it is, there it remains until it guards a plainer one. You're a very silly fellow, Mr. Frere. I write no paper, I

sign no document, and with all humility I tell you, you may do your—

JACK. Damnedest! I say it for you. I *will!* The dog-cart—that's Jim. Excuse me—*(up c. and off R. U. E. he goes out to meet him. LADY D. starts up as JACK disappears through open hall door, she stands for a moment with clenched hands and teeth, then she draws a long quick breath like a hiss)*

LADY D. (c.) He means it. He's in the mood that stops at nothing. *(a thought flashes across her mind—and she turns and stares at the door of the room MUNKITRICK is in L. 2 E.)* If only I could make Fred—I'll try—It's *(moves c.)* my only chance. I'll try—nothing would matter then. *(the door of the smoking-room L. 2 E. opens and MUNK. comes out. He sees LADY D. and holds out his hands cheerily, going to her L.C.)*

MUNK. (L. C.) All alone, Val?

LADY D. (c.) I—I was waiting for you, dear.

MUNK. *(delighted)* Were you really? I've not been half-an-hour—I—it was no use trying to read my letters. I couldn't think about 'em. I could only think about—Oh, my dear, I'm a very lucky man to have got you, ain't I?

LADY D. (c.) I don't know. I wonder am I good enough for you?

MUNK. (L. C. *Taking her hands delightedly*) I'll chance that. I've made myself what I am by chancing things. When I bought the Dunvollar claim all the big bugs swore I was a fool, but I came out on top. I guess it's the same with wives. When you think you've got a soft thing—hold on to it. *(tries to embrace her)*

LADY D. *(wincing a little and backing away from him)* Yes—yes—very praiseworthy. Fred!

MUNK. My dear!

LADY D. Will you do me a favour?

MUNK. Anything.

LADY D. *(pleading prettily and holding out her hands)* I go to town for the day. Come with me shopping. Will you come?

MUNK. *(delightedly catching her hands and kissing them)* Will a duck swim?

LADY D. *(quickly)* What train can we catch!

MUNK. *(looking at watch)* There's the 11.30 then nothing till 12.40.

LADY D. *(then she goes to him as if with an impulse of great affection and whispers softly)* Freddy, I—I—oh, I'm so happy, dear. I want to say something to you.

MUNK. *(with a self-satisfied chuckle)* Go ahead.

LADY D. Last night, you know what you begged for and I refused?

MUNK. Eh?

LADY D. You—begged to be married at once, without any fuss—quietly—at once.

MUNK. Rather! But you said—

LADY D. I was a fool, it was all so sudden. Fred, I've just had a thought, it's my birthday, my lucky day. I won't contradict you, dear. Let's catch the 12.40; let's go—(*turns away*) up to town, but (*tenderly*) I don't want to go shopping. How can we fill in the time? (*turning to him*)

MUNK. (*catching her meaning.*) Get married! Special license. Glory be to everything. Pack up—slap along. I'm your man. (*he kisses her*)

LADY D. You dear! (*he crosses to door L. and looks back. She runs up stairs C. on platform, she blows a kiss to MUNK., who returns it. Looking out at window C.*) And now do your damndest—Mr. All-Powerful-Frere. (*exit door above L. 8 E.*)

MUNK. Where's my man? The fool's never here when he's wanted. (*rings for valet—button below fireplace L. H. JIM enters with JACK C. from R. U. E., servant enters, MUNK. in pantomime asks for his coat*)

JIM. (*excitedly down C.*) What the devil did you wire in for? It only just caught me in time. I'd been in Paris now. Hullo, Munkittrick.

MUNK. Hullo, Jim!

JIM. As I drove up I met a man with this wire for you—I brought it on—save time.

MUNK. Excuse me?

JIM. Certainly, go ahead. (*gives it to MUNK., and up C. taking off gloves, MUNK. reads it with horror—they notice it*)

JACK. (*R. C. quickly*) What's up?

MUNK. (*L. C., glaring at telegram*)—Everything's up! God's life, this may cost me thousands. When are the trains—when are the damned trains? I can't wait for the 12.40, I must go at once. (*servant enters L. 2 E. MUNK. takes hat from him and goes up R. C., servant goes above table C. with coat*)

JIM. (*on platform up C. looking off R.*) The dog-cart's still there; if you drive like blazes you'll catch the 11.30.

MUNK. (*struggling into coat?*) An hour might mean a pot of money—tell her—tell her, can't wait to be married to-day—be married to-morrow—much too much money at stake.

JACK. (*R. C.*) Tell who?

MUNK. (*struggling with his coat held by Footman*) She's dressing now to come up by the 12.40 and be married—I can't wait. Damn the sleeve! (*he dashes out and calls out R.*) Drive!—drive! if you kill the beast, but catch that train.

JIM. (*looking after him up C.*) He'll do it.

JACK. (*to himself—down R. C.*) Go up by the 12.40 to be married! Be married, a smart move, my lady, but it hasn't come off! Fate fights for me.

JIM. (*coming down C.*) What did you wire me like that for? I ain't had a wink of sleep. I thought my wife must 'a broke a blood-vessel or somethin'.

JACK. (R. C.) Nothing of the sort. You want to be reconciled to her, don't you?

JIM. Course I do; she's a jolly good sort and all that—and—and 'pon my soul, I've never done anything I shouldn't since I've been a married man.

JACK. I knew that. That's one of the reasons I wired for you; There was another reason, but I don't think it'll be necessary to go into that after all—there's been the devil's own delight here about you and your lady friend and that infernal flat.

JIM. (*aghast*) Has there—(*moving down L.*) oh, my gracious, who's told her? (*SIR H. enters from garden L. U. E. as MRS. GREAVES comes down-stairs from archway upper platform R. 3 E.*)

SIR H. (*looking off R. U. E. excitedly*) Miss Marr is coming up the drive.

JACK. (*running quickly out C. to R.*) So soon? (*SIR H. follows JACK.*)

MRS. G. (*in great dismay—stops short on the stairs*) Billy Marr—coming back, and I stayed in bed till she'd gone—don't let her in. I won't. (*sees JIM and stands aghast*)

JIM. (*a little nervously—down L. C.*) Morning, Jane.

MRS. G. (*pointing a scornful finger at him*) I don't see you except in the presence of the law—we've passed the church.

JIM. (*looking up at her pathetically*) You always were a jolly good sort and all that, don't get shirty when Jack's wire startled me into thinking you were dead.

MRS. G. (*fiercely*) Oh, did it—and you've been acting as if I was, haven't you? Well I ain't—amn't. I'm alive and kicking. (*with intense scorn*) Toodles!

JIM. (*starting back—aghast*) What!

MRS. G. I've found you out, my heart's broken and I've packed "Wang" home to her mamma. (*enter BILLY C. to R. in state of intense excitement, followed by JACK and SIR H. MRS. G. seeing her is unable to bear the shock, she's in a state of collapse*) Back again!

BILLY. (*down C. and up again with lines—wringing her hands*) I can't help it. Where's my maid—my luggage—my ticket—my money, it's maddening!

JACK. (*on platform C.—SIR H. L. of him*) I saw her start for the station long before you did.

MRS. G. So did I—

BILLY. She's not there.

MRS. G. (*with a snort of scorn*) A paltry excuse to come back.

BILLY. (*C. down a step towards MRS. G.—fiercely*) Do you think that I wished to come back?

JIM. (*advancing a step or two utterly bewildered*) What the dickens is—

MRS. G. (*rising from her seat on the stairs and pointing at BILLY with a tragic gesture*) Address one word to that minx in my presence and I'll slap you, "Toodles." (*JIM sits in chair L. of table L. C.*)

BILLY. (*turning up to JACK and SIR H.—in great distress and agitation*) Where—where can Fielding have—

SIR H. (*L. C. interrupting quickly*) She may have gone to the wrong station.

JACK. (*C.—with conviction*) Of course, that's it. She looked like a girl who would.

BILLY. (*dismayed*) The Junction! My gracious, it's miles away.

JACK. (*with great seriousness*) Miles—five at least—how perfectly awful for you. You'll have to sit down and wait till she comes back. (*BILLY down stage L. C. and sitting R. of table L. C.*)

MRS. G. (*sitting backwards on to the third step*) Oh, to think that one of his piccadillys is sitting in my hall!

JIM. (*starting up from chair*) Jane, what in the name of heaven—(*HARRY is on platform L. C.*)

JACK. (*pushing JIM into chair up L. of C. arch*) Don't interfere, Jim. For goodness sake leave this to me. Mrs. Greaves, Sir Harry would like to have a few words with you.

MRS. G. (*rising proudly—coming down steps to R. C.*) With these two persons present—my own house is no place for me. When Miss Marr thinks fit to vacate it, somebody will have the goodness to tell me when I can come out of the garden. (*she stalks out C. off L. As she goes she gets quite near to BILLY, and fearing her skirts will touch her, she gathers them about her*)

JACK. (*going quickly to SIR H. R.*) Harry, follow her—get her reasonable—tell her all we agreed on, if the worst comes to the worst, I'll see that she gets her proof. (*puts him off to L.*)

JIM. (*rising*) But I'm in the dark.

JACK. (*taking JIM by the collar, putting him across R. C.*) And the place for you too. (*BILLY sits hopelessly R. of table*)

JIM. (*expostulating*) But—

JACK. (*showing JIM towards breakfast room R. 2 E.*) Breakfast's still there—

JIM. But I've had my breakfast!

JACK. Eat, man—eat till I tell you to stop. (*forcibly shoves him into breakfast room and shuts door on him—JACK and BILLY are left alone. JACK going towards her with outstretched hands gradually during speech*) Billy, dear, do be good to me, a poor weak man.

BILLY. Huh!

JACK. I'm a brute—a—a—oh, everything that's awful, but I've never swerved in my faith in you, my love for you. Listen. These people have insulted you. You haven't the faintest notion how outrageously they have insulted you. You were quite right not to prove them wrong. (*goes to back of table*) I'll do that for you. When that's been done, you won't mind my telling you that you're the sweetest, bravest, honestest little woman that I've ever met, and I'm the proudest man in all the world because you're going to be my wife.

BILLY. I'm not—I said I wouldn't be.

JACK. But—but—(*then suddenly with tenderness*) Oh, Billy dear, don't say it any more. (*comes down R. of her*) We—we've got out of the straight somehow, haven't we—shan't we get back? Do let's. (*a pause—then he whispers—beside her*) What can I say to persuade you?

BILLY. (*slowly*) Do you want to say anything?

JACK. (*softly*) No, dear—but—but I should—I should like to—to kiss you—we—we could talk better afterwards, couldn't we?

BILLY. I—I—(*then with a sudden change of tone*) You always laugh at me.

JACK. (*expostulates*) Oh, my dear.

BILLY. (*fiercely*) You do. It's in your eyebrows.

JACK. (*laughs and takes her hands*) Oh, Billy, Billy, don't look at my eyebrows—look at me.

BILLY. (*struggling a little against him*) You—you treat me like a child.

JACK. I don't.

BILLY. You do—you laugh at me. (*melting a little*) Promise never to laugh at me again. (*she rises into his arms*)

JACK. I promise. (*he kisses her tenderly—a pause—then he whispers*) Oh, my little love. I told you I had a presentiment that you'd come back. (*BILLY suddenly disengages herself from him, struck by an idea*)

BILLY. Did you tell Fielding what station to go to?

JACK. (*anxiously*) Ye—yes.

BILLY. (*flashing out—starts away to L. and circles round table to C.*) There—there—what did I tell you—you—you—Oh, it's cruel (*meeting him C.*) You treat me as if I were a fool.

JACK. (*distressed*) Billy—Billy, do listen—

BILLY. (*starts away again to L.*) I won't—and what's more, I haven't the slightest intention of ever becoming your wife. (*down L.*)

JACK. (*R. C.—with a laugh*) What, again! This really makes our position ridiculous.

SIR H. (*up L. C. gravely*) Jack, it's no good, the old lady won't listen to reason. You'll have to take the extreme measures. (*LADY DUNCAN seen coming across upper platform from L. 3 E. and down stairs, dressed for her departure for London. BILLY has come up to C.*)

JACK. Well—I'm ready. Quick, man. Take Miss Marr into the garden. (*putting her to SIR H.*)

SIR H. (*taking BILLY'S hand and drawing her off C. to R.*) Come with me, Miss Marr.

BILLY. I won't.

SIR H. You must. (*he takes her off despite herself C. to R. LADY DUNCAN comes down smiling*)

LADY D. (*at foot of stairs*) Still here?

JACK. (*R. C.*) Where are you going?

LADY D. (*sweetly*) I'm going to do some shopping—

JACK. (*bluntly*) Munkittrick asked me to tell you he can't marry you to-day. (*LADY D. drops a glove—JACK picks it up—hands it to her*) Don't be alarmed. I have not spoken to him—yet. A business telegram compelled him to catch the 11.30 at the risk of disappointing you—however he will marry you to-morrow—unless—

LADY D. (*crossing to R. of table*) Your word of honour he has gone.

JACK. Word of honour. Jim's in the breakfast room, ask him too, he saw him go.

LADY D. (*very dismayed*) Jim already—(*sits R. of table*)

JACK. Write those few words—no one shall read them but I and Mrs. Greaves.

LADY D. (*angrily*) I tell you once for all, you get nothing out of me. (*he goes towards breakfast room R. 2 E.*)

LADY D. (*watches him anxiously, rising*) Where are you going?

JACK. (*turning to her quietly*) I'm going to fetch Jim, we can all talk it over together.

LADY D. (*between her teeth*) You brute.

JACK. (*calls R. 2 E.*) Jim!

JIM. (*from inside R. 2 E.*) Hullo!

JACK. Come here.

LADY D. (*defiantly*) He daren't give me away.

JACK. He won't be able to help himself. (*JIM GREAVES comes out of breakfast room, sees LADY D.*)

JIM. Hullo! Good morning, Lady Duncan.

JACK. (*very gravely and firmly*) Jim, your wife is under the impression that Miss Marr was with you at 138

Victoria Street in the year 1901. Under this misapprehension she almost publicly turned your cousin out of the house.

JIM. (*sinking into chair R. below door R. 2 E.*) Good God!

JACK. (*R. C.—continuing*) Unless your wife can be convinced of her error, Miss Marr's position is a most unenviable one.

JIM. (*rising—looking at LADY D. R.*) Did you know anything of this?

LADY D. (*C. smiling serenely*) Dear Jane confided in me.

JIM. (*looking at LADY D. in amazement*) Not a shred—upon my soul—you ain't got a shred—

JACK. I was telling Lady Duncan that if I don't get a written confession from either the fair culprit herself or from you, Jim, I must proceed to extremities.

LADY D. (*laughing*) I'm afraid, Mr. Frere, that neither Mr. Greaves nor I can possibly be of use to you in this little affair.

JACK. Is this your view of the matter, Jim?

JIM. (*R., completely bewildered*) I—I—(*JACK up R. C. To himself*) I mustn't speak, and I can't keep silent. Oh my gracious—what a devilish position to be in. (*LADY D. crosses to fireplace. JACK goes up to platform, calls off R.*)

JACK. Harry—here! Miss Marr will excuse you for a moment. (*SIR H. comes in from garden C. from R. Goes to C. JACK comes down to R. C.*) Harry, Jim doesn't quite see which way the compass of his honour points, I must tell him that you and I know who his companion was—having interviewed his valet Hagson,

JIM. (*down R. starting up*) What! (*sits in chair below door*)

JACK. (*hears imaginary wheels*) Who's that?

SIR H. (*going up to platform C. L. of it, and looking off R.*) By Jove, it's Munkittrick coming back. (*remains on platform L. C.*)

LADY D. (*going up to platform and looking off—starting up*) No, no,—he mustn't now. (*comes down to L. of table*)

JACK. (*excitedly—C.*) Splendid! Now once and for all we can settle matters. He's a man of the world. Sir Harry and I will tell him everything—he shall decide. (*coming to R. of table*) Lady Duncan, I mean what I say, won't you keep your ring?

LADY D. (*across table*) I want to—you mean to tell him?

JACK. Yes.

LADY D. Don't do that. I can't afford it—oh, why didn't he catch his train! Do you mean to tell Billy?

JACK. Not a word.

LADY D. (*sits—with a laugh of relief*) That makes all the difference. Why didn't you say so before. Pen quick! JACK. I didn't know that was a point.

LADY D. That's because you know nothing of women. (*she writes, hands it to JACK, L.*) That do?

JACK. Admirably! (*he puts it into his pocket and contentedly joins HARRY as MUNK. re-enters C. from R. HARRY on platform. JACK C. SIR H., L. C.*)

MUNK. (*coming down L. C. below table—speaks as he enters*) Missed it by two minutes, and they wouldn't run a special, it can't be helped. Hullo, my dear, we'll catch the 12.40 after all.

LADY D. (*L. prettily*) I'm so glad, Fred dear. (*MRS. GREAVES enters C. from L. and is down R. As JANE enters, JIM takes chair R. of staircase, and puts it closer to it, so as to be out of sight. He sits*) It was such a disappointment to me to lose you. Ah, Jane—

MRS. G. (*on platform between JACK and SIR H.—feverishly*) Is that young woman gone?

SIR H. (*up L. C. diplomatically*) She is not present.

MRS. G. (*with great relief*) Then at least I can breathe freely. (*goes down to R. C. SIR H. and JACK come down off platform*)

LADY D. (*crossing C.*) Fred and I are deserting you for a little while to-day, Jane dear, we are going up by the 12.40 to—to—

MUNK. (*L. C. with a chuckle*) To—to—do a little shopping.

LADY D. (*C. turning to him sweetly*) If we started at once we could walk to the station, couldn't we, Fred?

MUNK. (*L. C. looking at his watch*) On our heads, my dear.

LADY D. (*C.*) Oh no! I think I should like to walk conventionally for once. (*LADY D. and MUNK up C.*)

MRS. G. (*R.*) You'll be back in time for dinner?

LADY D. (*on platform C.*) Oh, I hope so, Jane—au revoir. (*to SIR H. and JACK who are up L. C. Exeunt LADY D. and MUNK. C. to L.*)

JACK. (*up L. C. to SIR H., who is L. of him*) We'll never see her again.

SIR H. (*up L. C.*) That's a comfort!

JACK. (*down C. to MRS. G., who is below stairs*) Mrs. Greaves, you will not believe Sir Harry's word or mine.

MRS. G. (*L. C.*) You're both prejudiced.

JACK. For the last time—you won't believe us?

MRS. G. (*R. C.*) Jack, my boy, I'd like to, but I can't. I must believe my own eyes.

JACK. I'm sorry, as you compel me, for Miss Marr's sake, to show you this. (*he holds out the paper. JIM is in a*

state of collapse in chair by stairway B. She stretches out her hand for it, but JACK stops her with a gesture and puts it behind his back. Continues to MRS. G.) If I give you this, will you promise not to mention the lady's name to any one? Mind you, this affair happened before your marriage. Will you promise? (*during this JIM has come forward to newel post B. and tries to see what they are giving her*)

MRS. G. (*after a struggle*) I promise, wor—word of honour. (*JACK gives her LADY D.'s paper. MRS. G. takes it, and reads it; it dazes her—she reads it again, then says huskily*) Let me be awhile—I—I ain't quite myself. (*JACK offers to assist her*)—No—(*SIR H. offers to assist her*) Let me be. (*SIR H. goes up. SIR H. makes movement towards her on her R., she motions him away. JIM who has been at newel post holding himself by it almost falls. This attracts her attention to him. She glares. He sneaks down R. a little*) Is this true?

JIM. (*glumly*) Yes. (*a pause*)

JACK. (*turns to SIR H. and says very quietly—above MRS. G.*) Call Billy? (*SIR H. goes into garden C. to R.*)

MRS. G. (*JACK comes to her, feebly*) Let me be awhile. (*she turns towards the breakfast room R.*)

JACK. (*detaining her*) I cannot let you keep that paper.

MRS. G. No, no, quite right. (*she gives it back to him—then pointing to JIM says*) Take him away for a bit.

(*Enter SIR H. and BILLY, R. C.*)

JACK. (*gently*) Have you nothing to say to Billy?

MRS. G. Oh, what will she say to me?

JACK. (*moves up*) Ask her. (*BILLY comes down, SIR H. remains on platform. The old woman holds out her arms pleadingly to BILLY.*)

MRS. G. Will you? I can't think you will. I'm an old and not a very happy woman, will you? (*BILLY goes tenderly to her, and with a sob the old lady takes her tenderly in her arms and drops her head upon her shoulder. JACK crosses L. and tears up LADY D.'s confession and throws it into the fire L. R.*)

SIR H. You've torn it up?

JACK. Who needs it now? (*exit SIR H. C. to L. JACK looks longingly at BILLY, who sits R. of table burying her head in her arms. JACK stands at fireplace. MRS. G. is also wiping her eyes—then she turns and looks at her husband and with a little break in her voice she says*)

MRS. G. (C.) Jim!—Jim!

JIM. I—I—

MRS. G. (*then she chokes and splutters out*) Don't say

another word about it, and I'll double your allowance.
(JIM turns away and then turns back to her)

JIM. (*hotly*) Damn the allowance! Dash it! I only want to jog along and keep straight.

MRS. G. (*softly*) Do you really, Jim? (*going towards him a bit*)

JIM. 'Course I do—you're a jolly good sort, and all that, and—(*words fail him*)

MRS. G. (*almost in tears again*) D'y'e really think so, JIM? (*then wistfully going a little further towards him*) Honest Injun, Jim?

JIM. (*firmly*) Honest Injun.

MRS. G. (*turning back to C. with a choke*) Come outside. I can't talk now. (*she goes up C. and then turns back*) Oh, Jimmy, I—I'm an old fool—but—I—I'll buck up and be better if I can. (*she blows her nose to conceal her emotion and hurries out into the garden C. to L.*)

JIM. (*To JACK as he hurries after her*) It's all right. Ye see she's a jolly good sort and all that, ain't she? (*he disappears quickly C. to L. JACK looks pleadingly at BILLY then goes to above table*)

JACK. Billy! (*she doesn't move*) We—we've been a little foolish haven't we, dear? It—it's my fault I think, dear. It—it hasn't been wise to shut up our real selves from each other. I—I was a fool.

BILLY. (*with a half sob*) So was I.

JACK. (*coming down to R. of table*) Oh, my dear, shall we try again?

BILLY. (*he raises her and takes her in her arms*) If you please, Jack!

JACK. And anything that ever happened, Billy, in all our lives, Billy, we'll bring to each other for help.

BILLY. (*looking up lovingly into his eyes*) For help, yes, Jack. (*he kisses her*)

JACK. (*putting his arm round her tenderly*) Did you sniff?

BILLY. No!

JACK. Oh!

QUICK CURTAIN.







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